DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 405 771 HE 030 009

TITLE	Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program.
INSTITUTION	Minnesota State Office of the Legislative Auditor, St. Paul. Program Evaluation Div.
REPORT NO	PE-96-05
PUB DATE	Mar 96
NOTE	178p.; For an earlier report, see ED 369 312. Executive summary printed on colored paper.
AVAILABLE FROM	Program Evaluation Division, Centennial Office Building, First Floor South, St. Paul, MN 55155.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC08 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Acceleration (Education); *Administrators; College Bound Students; *Educational Attitudes; Educational Policy; Higher Education; High Schools; High School Students; Principals; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *State Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act (Minnesota)

ABSTRACT

This report provides an evaluation of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, enacted in Minnesota in 1985 to allow 11th- and 12th-grade students to take postsecondary courses at state expense. It is based on interviews with state education and social services officials, a survey of 401 high school principals and directors of alternative schools that enrolled eligible students, a survey of 76 admissions directors from participating postsecondary institutions, a telephone survey of 300 students (and their parents) enrolled in the program, and visits to participating high schools and postsecondary institutions. It was found that six percent of Minnesota public school juniors and seniors took part in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1994-95, and that program participants generally received higher grades than regularly admitted postsecondary students, except at technical colleges, where they did somewhat worse. School administrators, students, and parents said that the most important reasons why students participated in the program were to get a head start on college and to save on postsecondary costs. Most program participants, their parents, postsecondary school administrators, and directors of alternative schools were satisfied with the program, while most high school administrators were not. Three appendixes provide copies of survey forms. (MDM)

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Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program

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March 1996

Program Evaluation Division
Office of the Legislative Auditor
State of Minnesota

HE 030 019

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Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program

March 1996
96-05

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JAMES R. NOBLES, LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

March 4, 1996

Members
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In June 1995, the Legislative Audit Commission directed us to evaluate the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program which was created in 1985 to expand educational opportunities for students. The program allows high school juniors and seniors to take college-level courses at state expense. The commission wanted to know whether the program was achieving its goals and what kind of impact it was having on students, high schools, and postsecondary institutions.

Overall, we found that the program is working well. Most students have taken courses in core academic areas and, except for those in technical colleges, most have performed better than regularly enrolled postsecondary students. Most of those affected by the program, including students and parents, are highly satisfied with the program and have few complaints. High school administrators, however, reported that the program sometimes made it difficult for them to plan, schedule high school classes, and budget their resources.

We recommend that schools and colleges should better coordinate their efforts and take steps to ensure that participating students enroll in the most appropriate courses and institutions. We also think the Legislature should consider expanding participation by making all postsecondary institutions that participate in the State Grant program eligible to enroll students under the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

Our report was researched and written by Marilyn Jackson-Beeck and Jo Vos (co-project managers) and Judy Grew, with assistance from Michael Blumfield and Patrick Deza, and cost approximately $60,000. We appreciate the assistance we received from the Department of Children, Families, and Learning, the University of Minnesota, and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and we thank the school administrators, students, and parents who responded to our surveys.

Sincerely,

James Nobles
Legislative Auditor

Roger Brooks
Deputy Legislative Auditor

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MINNESOTA OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1985 Legislature enacted the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program as one of the first of several state efforts to reform public education and expand opportunities for Minnesota students.[1] According to state law, the program is intended to "promote rigorous academic pursuits and provide a variety of options" for 11th- and 12th-grade students by giving them an opportunity to take postsecondary classes at state expense. Policy makers hoped that the competition from colleges and universities might force secondary schools to become more responsive to the needs of students and parents.

Over the program's 10-year history, some policy makers have become concerned that it might not be fulfilling its statutory purposes and might even have some negative effects on K-12 education. In June 1995, the Legislative Audit Commission directed us to study the program. We asked the following questions:

- **What types of students have participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program and why? To what extent have participating students, parents, and school administrators been satisfied with the program?**

- **What types of courses have students taken, and have they completed them satisfactorily?**

- **How have secondary and postsecondary schools implemented the program? Has access been a problem in any part of the state?**

- **How have schools been affected by the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program? What has been the fiscal impact of the program on students, school districts, postsecondary schools, and the state?**

To answer these questions, we interviewed students, teachers, counselors, administrators, and state experts in education budgeting and finance. We analyzed student records and payment data from the Department of Children, Families and Learning and studied data on students' characteristics and performance. To assess satisfaction with the program, the adequacy of its implementation, and the extent of problems associated with it, we surveyed almost all of the state's high school prin-

1 *Minn. Stat.* §123.3514. Other examples include open enrollment, high school graduation incentives, and the educational effectiveness program.

cipals, directors of alternative learning programs, and participating postsecondary campuses plus a representative sample of 300 student participants and their parents. Finally, we visited a number of secondary and postsecondary schools throughout the state.

Our study focused on students who left their secondary schools for at least part of the day to take one or more courses at a postsecondary school through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. We did not look at students who took postsecondary courses in their own high schools, postsecondary courses through contracts between schools, or secondary school courses that might lead later to postsecondary credit.[2]

Overall, the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program satisfies participants and poses few problems.

Overall, we found that most students, parents, postsecondary school administrators, and directors of alternative secondary schools have been satisfied and had few problems with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. High school administrators reported various concerns about the program's educational effect and its administrative and financial burden, but we found no evidence that they or other high school staff have unduly discouraged students from participating.

Program participants have been strongly motivated by monetary savings due to the program. We estimated that program participants and their parents avoided having to pay about $10.9 million for postsecondary tuition, fees, books, and materials in 1993-94 that would have been required if they had enrolled in postsecondary courses without the program. We estimated that the program cost the state about $4.5 million by increasing postsecondary education costs by $16.3 million while decreasing K-12 education expenditures $11.8 million.

BACKGROUND

The decision to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program rests with students, parents, and postsecondary schools--not with school districts. Districts must inform students about the program by March 1 of each year, and the law encourages school officials to provide counseling for interested students.[3] To participate, students must meet the admission requirements of the postsecondary school that they wish to attend. Students receive secondary credit for courses successfully completed and may apply for postsecondary credit for the same courses after graduating from high school.

All juniors and seniors enrolled in Minnesota public schools, except for cultural exchange students, as well as some adults 21 years old or more who have not graduated from high school are eligible to participate in the program under the High School Graduation Incentives Act. Eligible postsecondary schools include

2 The law permits individual districts to contract with postsecondary schools to provide courses to their students at postsecondary campuses, but Department of Children, Families and Learning provides no reimbursement and so does not maintain records of student participation in these cases. High school programs that may later lead to postsecondary credit include Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses.

3 *Minn. Stat.* §123.3514, Subd. 4, 4a, 4b.

all public postsecondary schools; private, non-profit vocational schools that grant associate degrees; accredited opportunities industrialization centers; and private colleges if they have on-campus housing and are liberal arts, degree-granting institutions.

POSTSECONDARY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS

In all:

- **During the 1994-95 school year, 87 postsecondary campuses throughout the state enrolled secondary students through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

Some postsecondary schools are not eligible for the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program yet participate in the State Grant program.

However, this does not include all public or private postsecondary campuses. Several private colleges told us they would like to participate but are ineligible. Eligibility criteria for the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program differ from those used by financial aid programs also intended to encourage postsecondary education. To remove this inconsistency and further expand options for high school students, we recommend that:

- **The Legislature should consider amending *Minn. Stat.* §123.3514 so that private colleges and for-profit vocational schools that are eligible for the State Grant program may also enroll secondary students through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

We found that:

- **Six percent of Minnesota public school juniors and seniors took courses at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1994-95.**

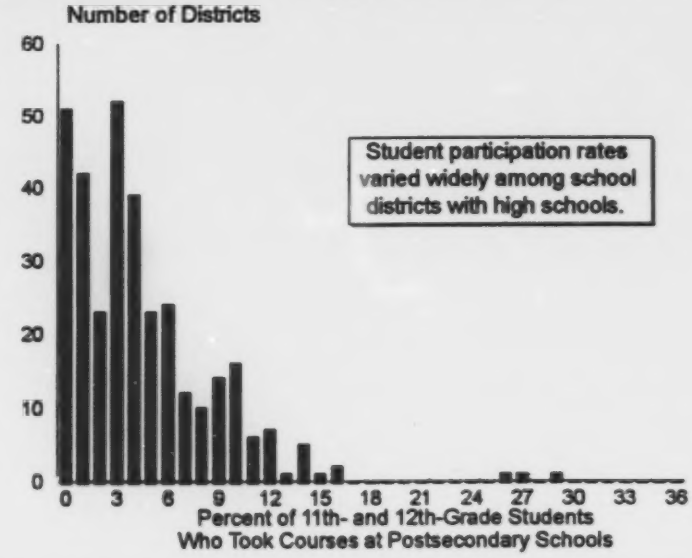
In all, the Department of Children, Families and Learning recorded 6,671 official participants out of the state's 112,989 public school juniors and seniors.

As shown below:

- **Student participation rates varied considerably among school districts and high schools during the 1994-95 school year.**

Using data collected by the Department of Children, Families and Learning, we found that student participation rates ranged from 0 to 29 percent of high school

Student Participation Rates in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95


Number of Districts
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
0 3 6 9 12 15 18 21 24 27 30 33 36
Percent of 11th- and 12th-Grade Students Who Took Courses at Postsecondary Schools
Student participation rates varied widely among school districts with high schools.

Sources: Office of the Legislative Auditor Secondary School Survey (n = 401), 1995, and Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1995.

juniors and seniors.[4] The average participation rate in school districts was 4.4 percent and the median was 3.4 percent.

Some outstate students have less access to the program.

Fifteen percent of all districts with high schools (48 of 331) reported that no students from their districts participated in the program during the 1994-95 school year. Most of these districts (43) were in central or northern Minnesota; none were in the Twin Cities area. About one-half of the districts lacking program participants were more than 20 miles from a city with a postsecondary school. These districts accounted for approximately 4 percent of the state's total 11th- and 12th-grade enrollment for 1994-95.

Compared with students from the seven-county Twin Cities area, outstate students were slightly less likely to participate. Our study showed that, for outstate students, distance was the single most important explanation for their participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. We found that:

- **The closer an outstate school district or high school was to a city with a postsecondary school, the higher the student participation rate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1994-95.**

4 Participation rates for school districts include only those students for whom the Department of Children, Families and Learning reimbursed postsecondary schools. We calculated rates based on the number of juniors and seniors who were enrolled in each district as of October 1, 1994. Although data on the number of participants include a small number of adults, we were not able to determine the overall number of adults enrolled in districts that were eligible for the program.

For example, the median participation rate was 7.4 percent for high schools located in the same outstate cities as postsecondary schools compared with 2.0 percent for high schools more than 40 miles from a city with a postsecondary school. However, few students were far from cities with postsecondary schools, and 6 percent of program participants solved the access problem by living on postsecondary campuses in 1994-95.

Distance from cities with postsecondary schools did not affect student participation in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, probably because most districts and high schools are within easy commuting distance to several postsecondary schools. Other potentially important factors, including the availability of postsecondary courses in high school, the depth of the secondary curriculum, and school administrators' level of satisfaction with the program, were statistically insignificant.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Our study found that most public and private postsecondary education systems typically imposed tougher admission requirements on secondary students than on regularly admitted postsecondary students. However, technical colleges usually applied the same admission standards for all students during the 1994-95 school year. We also found that:

- **Program participants generally received higher grades than regularly admitted postsecondary students during the 1994-95 school year, except at technical colleges, where they did somewhat worse.**

Nine percent of the grades earned by secondary students at technical colleges were "F" or "No credit" compared with 6 percent of the grades received by new degree-seeking technical college students. Also, program participants' overall grade point averages were higher than those of regularly admitted public postsecondary students, except at technical colleges.

Although some technical college administrators have since raised their admissions standards, we recommend that:

- **The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system should establish a general, uniform policy for admitting secondary students who enroll in technical colleges through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

Last fall, the system changed its Postsecondary Enrollment Options policy to allow colleges to establish different academic progress standards for secondary students.[5] It maintained a single, uniform admissions policy for secondary students who apply to state universities and community colleges (juniors must rank in the

5 Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board Policy 3.5, *Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program*, amended September 20, 1995.

upper third of their high school class and seniors in the upper half) but left the policy silent regarding technical colleges. Such a policy might require counseling, placement tests, interviews, and/or a certain level of academic performance, subject to individual exceptions.

Students commonly take core academic courses.

Most of the postsecondary courses taken by program participants were in core academic areas, mainly in social sciences (27 percent) such as history, economics, and political science; language arts (23 percent) such as English, composition, and literature; math (8 percent); science (7 percent); and world languages (4 percent). Vocational and technical courses accounted for 12 percent of all courses, along with business (4 percent), and health (3 percent). Five percent of the courses involved physical education and arts/music, respectively. According to at least two-thirds of the students in our survey, postsecondary courses proceeded at a faster pace, were more in-depth, and required more homework time than secondary courses.

Although the statutory purposes of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program are to promote rigorous academic pursuits and a variety of education options, we found that:

- **School administrators, students, and parents said that the most important reasons why students participated in the program were to get a head start on college credits and to save on postsecondary costs.**

Students participate mainly to earn college credits and save money.

As shown, 94 percent of the students in our survey said that getting a head start on college credits was "important" or "very important" to their participation in 1994-95, and 82 percent said that saving on postsecondary costs was "important" or "very important." Eighty-seven percent of the secondary administrators and 92 percent of the postsecondary administrators in our surveys said that college credits were "important" or "very important" to the students who used the program in 1994-95, while 90 percent of the secondary administrators and 95 percent of the postsecondary administrators said the same of the importance of saving money. Likewise, 88 percent of the 1994-95 program participants' parents agreed that getting a head start on college credits was "somewhat important" or "very important" to their children, but they were less likely (78 percent) to stress the importance of saving on postsecondary costs.

By comparison, 77 percent of the program participants, 30 percent of secondary administrators, 65 percent of postsecondary administrators, and 87 percent of the parents said students participated because courses were more challenging. And 59 percent of students, 40 percent of secondary administrators, 81 percent of postsecondary administrators, and 76 percent of parents said an "important" or "very important" reason for the students' participation was that courses were not available in secondary schools. Nine percent of the students admitted participating because the postsecondary classes were less challenging, 18 percent because they wanted to avoid a certain high school course or teacher, 23 percent because they wanted to please their parents, 14 percent because they wanted to be with friends, and 46 percent because of the postsecondary school's location.

Administrators', Student Participants', and Parents' Ratings of the Importance of Various Reasons for Program Participation, 1994-95

	Secondary Administrators		Postsecondary Administrators		Students		Parents	
	Percent Who Said the Reason Was:							
	Important	Very important	Important	Very important	Important	Very important	Somewhat important	Very important
To get a head start on college credits	38%	49%	37%	55%	21%	73%	21%	67%
To save on postsecondary costs	29	61	36	59	38	44	21	57
Courses were more challenging	23	7	41	24	43	34	36	51
Courses were not available in secondary school	29	11	54	27	35	24	31	45

Note: The question, with some variation depending on the survey, was, "Students use the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program for a variety of reasons. Please indicate how important you think the following reasons were to students from your school who took courses at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year."

Sources: Office of the Legislative Auditor Surveys of Secondary Schools (n = 401), Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), Students (n = 300), and Parents (n = 300), 1995. Student and parent surveys are subject to sampling errors of ± 6 percentage points.

[a]Not asked.

Further, we found that:

- **Saving money on college costs was especially important to students with lower family incomes.**

As total family income decreased, the percentage of students who said that saving money on postsecondary costs was a "very important" reason for their participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program steadily increased. All of the students in our survey whose parents reported total family incomes below $15,000 and 79 percent of students with family incomes between $15,000 and $29,999 said that saving money was a "very important" reason why they participated. Sixty-eight percent of the students with total family incomes of $30,000 to $49,999 and 54 percent with incomes between $45,000 and $59,000 said that saving money was "very important," compared with 42 percent of students from families with incomes of $60,000 or more.

PROGRAM SATISFACTION

In our surveys, we asked about overall attitudes toward the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. We learned that:

- **Most program participants, their parents, postsecondary school administrators, and directors of alternative secondary schools were**

satisfied with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, but most high school administrators were not.

Seventy-three percent of participating students told us that they were "very satisfied" with their experience in the program and another 24 percent said they were "somewhat satisfied." Ninety-five percent of participants' parents said that they would "definitely" or "probably" encourage their children to participate again. Seventy-two percent of postsecondary administrators and 82 percent of alternative school directors, but only 42 percent of high school administrators, "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the program was generally performing in a satisfactory manner.

In addition, we found that:

- **Sixty-two percent of student participants said they had no major problems using the program in 1994-95.**

Most students reported no major problems in using the program.

The students' two greatest problems, each affecting 36 percent of respondents, related to scheduling difficulties and the availability of specific postsecondary courses. Also, we asked students about who was involved in their decision to participate and whether they were encouraging, discouraging, or neutral and found that:

- **Students rarely reported that secondary teachers, counselors, or administrators discouraged their participation.**

Secondary school staff may have appropriately discouraged some students from participating because they were unprepared for college-level courses or had weak academic records. Also, it is important to note that what students may regard as discouragement could instead reflect school districts' legal duty to do as much as possible to warn students about the consequences of failing postsecondary courses and the effect that participation could have on high school graduation.[6]

NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS

We asked about ways to improve the program and found that:

- **Student participants, their parents, and school administrators generally agreed that there was a need for better information about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

About one-half of the students and postsecondary administrators said that information provided by secondary schools was in "much" or "critical" need of improvement, and 37 percent of parents agreed. Twenty-two percent of the secondary administrators, 25 percent of the student participants, and 29 percent of the parents also suggested the need for better information from postsecondary schools. Thirty-

6 *Minn. Stat.* §123.3514, Subd. 4a.

six percent of the students expressed a desire for improved communication between secondary and postsecondary schools, as did 22 percent of the secondary administrators and 12 percent of the postsecondary administrators. About one-half of the secondary administrators further indicated the need for better information about their students' postsecondary performance, while about one-third of the postsecondary administrators said that they needed better information about students' high school graduation requirements.

EFFECTS ON SCHOOLS

In general:

- **Secondary administrators were more likely than postsecondary administrators to cite negative effects due to the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

Secondary administrators' biggest concerns had to do with budgeting and class planning.

Twenty-three percent of the secondary administrators said the program had caused budget problems, 20 percent said that it had adversely affected their ability to schedule classes, and 12 to 14 percent said that the program undermined staff morale, support services for interested and participating students, student participation in school activities and appropriate staffing levels. Other problems, each mentioned by fewer than 10 percent of the secondary administrators, included student-staff interaction, communication with postsecondary schools, the number and quality of secondary courses, parental involvement, and student morale. In contrast, postsecondary administrators' two most common problems, mentioned by only 14 percent each, involved staffing levels and providing support services to participating or interested students.

Based on these and our other findings, it is clear that the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program could operate more efficiently for the benefit of all concerned. We recognize that it may have had some detrimental effects on secondary and postsecondary schools, but these are outweighed in our view by the benefits that the program has apparently brought to program participants. In addition, we think that administrative problems with the program may often be resolved by closer cooperation between secondary and postsecondary schools. Thus, we see no need to make major changes in the design of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. However, we recommend that:

- **Secondary and postsecondary schools should better coordinate their efforts and direct individual students to the most appropriate schools and courses for them.**

We hope that by working more closely together, schools can arrive at local solutions to problems related to admissions policies, students' academic performance and choice of courses, and secondary class planning and scheduling. Ultimately, we think it is local school districts' responsibility to determine whether students have fulfilled their overall high school graduation requirements, and it is postsec-

ondary schools' responsibility to make appropriate decisions about which students to admit.

FISCAL IMPACT

We estimated the costs and financial benefits of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program for 1993-94 and found that:

- **The Postsecondary Enrollment Options program reduced state and local expenditures for K-12 education by about $11.8 million during the 1993-94 school year but increased the state's postsecondary costs by an estimated $16.3 million.**[7]

The program's net cost to the state and localities was about $4.5 million in 1993-94.

- **By participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1993-94, students and their parents avoided paying an estimated $10.9 million in costs for tuition, fees, and books if the same students had enrolled in the same postsecondary courses without the program.**

We calculated that the net budgetary and non-budgetary cost of the program to the state and localities was about $4.5 million in 1993-94, and the net financial benefit to students and parents, after subtracting education support expenses, was $9.6 million. Students and the state could realize future financial benefits if postsecondary credits earned in high school are later transferred to postsecondary degree programs, but we could not estimate these benefits precisely.

At the district level, we calculated that:

- **The median difference in education aid was $14,149 among school districts where students participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during 1993-94.**[8]

We estimated that the program caused a median reduction of 0.34 percent of districts' total budgets. Or, looking at aid differences per participant in weighted pupil units, the median reduction was $4,017 each.

In addition, we found that:

- **Fifty-seven percent of postsecondary school administrators said that they placed no limit on the number of secondary students that they admitted, although statutes say that postsecondary students should take priority.**

7 The 1993-94 school year corresponds to the state's 1994 fiscal year.

8 The average reduction in aid was $30,433 per school district, but this is affected by a few large districts. For this reason, we prefer to use median figures, which represent the point where roughly half the districts would see higher or lower reductions.

Also, 45 percent said they allowed participants to register at the same time or before regularly admitted postsecondary students. We were told that, in some cases, it was impractical for students to wait to see if space was available and impossible for them to plan their schedules to meet high school graduation requirements otherwise. In addition, 38 percent of the seniors enrolled at the same postsecondary school the next year as regular students. As a result, it was often to postsecondary schools' advantage to admit secondary students, thus reducing future recruitment costs.

Introduction

Enacted by the 1985 Legislature, the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program allows 11th- and 12th-grade public school students and some adults to enroll full or part time in postsecondary schools at state expense. The purpose of the program is twofold: "to promote rigorous academic pursuits and to provide a variety of options to high school students."[1]

The Postsecondary Enrollment Options program was one of the first in a series of choice programs that the Legislature adopted beginning in the mid-1980s. In theory, choice programs are designed to increase the educational opportunities available to students and, at the same time, make schools more responsive to the needs, interests, and values of students and parents. It was hoped that participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program would allow students, especially those who were unmotivated or unchallenged by high school course offerings, to take advantage of the more diverse, faster-paced courses offered at postsecondary schools.

In addition to expanding course options available to students, the program is noteworthy because it puts control of educational resources in the hands of high school students and parents rather than secondary school administrators. Furthermore, it forces school districts into a more competitive environment by strengthening the influence of market forces in education.

During the 1995 legislative session, the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program generated considerable interest among legislators and school district officials. Some school officials argued that the program has been financially detrimental to their operations because they received less general education revenue for participating students. They also expressed concern that some students may be enrolling in easy courses to earn free postsecondary credits while bypassing some of the more challenging courses that are offered in their own schools. Finally, there were some questions about how postsecondary schools recruited students and how well they monitored their performance on campus.[2]

Other people thought that the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program has given students much more flexibility in planning their education while providing them a greater array of challenging or interesting courses. In addition, they argued

1 *Minn. Stat.* §123.3514, Subd. 2.

2 Legislation adopted by the 1995 Legislature prohibits postsecondary schools from recruiting secondary students on financial grounds. See *Minn. Laws* (1995), Ch. 212, Art. 2, Sec. 3.

that districts do not really lose money when students participate because districts have fewer students to educate.

Consequently, bills were introduced in both the House and Senate that would have required students to exhaust the advanced courses in their high schools before enrolling in courses at postsecondary schools. Although the bills did not pass, legislators requested a study of the program that would describe the number of students participating, their demographic characteristics, and the types of courses being taken, as well as evaluate the fiscal impact of the program, program compliance, and the program's responsiveness to parents, students, and teacher input.[3] In June 1995, the Legislative Audit Commission directed the Program Evaluation Division to study the program.

Specifically, our study focuses on the following research questions:

- **What types of students have participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program and why? To what extent have participating students, parents, and school administrators been satisfied with the program?**

- **What types of courses have students taken, and have they completed them satisfactorily?**

- **How have secondary and postsecondary schools implemented the program? Has access been a problem in any part of the state?**

- **How have schools been affected by the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program? What has been the fiscal impact of the program on students, school districts, postsecondary schools, and the state?**

To answer these questions, we used data from a variety of sources. We collected data and interviewed staff in the Department of Children, Families and Learning, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, and the University of Minnesota. In addition, we surveyed 401 high school principals and directors of alternative schools that enrolled eligible students and 76 admissions directors from participating postsecondary schools, and we contacted the admissions directors from 13 private nonprofit colleges that do not participate in the program. We conducted telephone interviews with a random sample of 300 students who participated in the program during the 1994-95 school year and their parents.[4] Finally, we visited a number of high schools and postsecondary schools throughout the state and met with various student, teacher, and administrator groups to learn more about their experiences with the program.

Our study focused on those students who left their high schools for at least part of the school day to take one or more courses at a postsecondary school through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. The study did not focus on students who took postsecondary courses in their own high

3 *Minn. Laws* (1st Spec. Sess. 1995), Ch. 3, Art. 7, Sec. 3.

4 See Appendices A, B, and C for details of our surveys.

schools.[5] Our study documented the types of courses that students took at postsecondary schools and the type of courses available in their high schools, but we did not evaluate course rigor. Course rigor can vary considerably among different schools as well as within a single school depending on course content and magnitude, instructor qualifications and ability, and student ability, and would have been very difficult to measure accurately.

This report has three chapters. Chapter 1 provides background information on the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program and discusses program implementation and operation. Chapter 2 analyzes student participation and their academic performance during the 1994-95 school year. Lastly, Chapter 3 examines the program's impact on students, schools, and the state.

5 Under the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, some districts contract with postsecondary schools to provide courses in the high school. These courses are usually taught by specially-trained high school teachers who are supervised by college faculty. In addition, the law permits districts to contract with postsecondary schools to provide courses to their students at postsecondary schools. Finally, some schools offer Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs that give students the opportunity to earn postsecondary credit for courses taken in high school. Although we documented how some of these programs have grown over time, we did not examine student performance or satisfaction regarding these options.

Program Operation

CHAPTER 1

Enacted by the 1985 Legislature, the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program allows 11th- and 12th-grade public school students and some adults 21 years of age or older who have not yet graduated from high school to enroll full or part time in postsecondary schools at state expense. Students receive secondary credit for courses completed successfully and may apply for postsecondary credit for the same courses after graduating from high school. The program's purpose is twofold: "to promote rigorous academic pursuits and to provide a variety of options to high school students by encouraging and enabling them to enroll in postsecondary courses."[1]

This chapter presents background information on the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Specifically, our research focused on the following questions:

- **How many students and postsecondary schools have participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, and how has participation changed over time?**
- **How have secondary and postsecondary schools implemented the program?**
- **To what extent have students and parents been satisfied with how the program has been implemented?**

Overall, we found that secondary and postsecondary schools have used a variety of methods to help ensure that students and parents were aware of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program for the 1994-95 school year. The majority of program participants and their parents said that they were satisfied with the overall amount of information, encouragement, and services that they received. Postsecondary schools controlled student access and, except for public technical colleges, usually had more stringent admission requirements for secondary students than for postsecondary students. At the same time, secondary schools remain ultimately responsible for ensuring that participating students meet high school graduation standards and outcomes, once adopted. To help students succeed in both settings, we think that it is important for all schools to work more closely together before and after students have been admitted to the program, as we recommend in Chapter 3.

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1 *Minn. Stat.* §123.3514, Subd. 2.

BACKGROUND

The Postsecondary Enrollment Options program was one of the first in a series of school choice programs enacted by the Legislature.

The Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, part of Governor Rudy Perpich's 1985 *Access to Excellence* package of school reforms, was one of the first in a series of student choice reforms that the Legislature enacted beginning in the mid-1980s. At the time, numerous education reforms were being discussed, both locally and nationally. Although the public's view of Minnesota's education system was quite positive, policy makers saw room for improvement. By the early 1980s, the Citizens League had already proposed a voucher system for public school students, and a number of other people were discussing increased student choice. In 1982, the Legislature enacted legislation that permitted high schools to establish programs in which students could take postsecondary courses. By 1985, the state was recovering from a major recession. Yet, policy makers did not consider reforms such as the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program to be expensive.

Enacted by the 1985 Legislature, the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program permits 11th- and 12th-grade public school students and certain adults to enroll in nonsectarian courses (those that are not affiliated with a specific religion) at postsecondary schools at state expense.[2] To participate, students must meet the admission requirements of the postsecondary schools that they want to attend. Students receive secondary credit for courses completed successfully and may apply for postsecondary credit for the same courses after graduating from high school.

Legislative Changes

The Legislature has made three significant changes to the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program since enactment in 1985. First, the 1986 Legislature added student and parent notification provisions. As shown in Figure 1.1, these provisions require districts, to the extent possible, to provide counseling services to students and their parents before they enroll in postsecondary courses. By March 1 of each year, districts must provide general program information to all students in the 10th and 11th grades. Students interested in participating are encouraged, but not required, to notify their school by March 30 of the preceding year.[3]

Second, the 1991 Legislature changed how the program was financed, and the changes generally resulted in school districts and postsecondary schools receiving less money for participating students. Previously, the Department of Education simply deducted students' tuition, fees, and books from districts' foundation aid and passed that amount along to postsecondary schools.[4] However, some districts received a disproportionate share of aid considering the amount of time that the students actually spent in high school. Postsecondary schools also received

2 *Minn. Laws* (1st Spec. Sess. 1985), Ch. 12, Art. 5, Sec. 1.

3 *Minn. Laws* (1986), Ch. 447, Sec. 1-11.

4 The Department of Education is now known as the Department of Children, Families and Learning.

Figure 1.1: Legislative History of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1985-95

Minn. Laws (1985), Ch. 12, Art. 5
- Postsecondary Enrollment Options program created.

Minn. Laws (1986), Ch. 447, Sec. 1-11
- To the extent possible, school districts are required to provide counseling services to students and their parents before students enroll in postsecondary courses.
- School districts are required to provide specific information about the program.
- By March 1, school districts must provide general information about the program to all 10th- and 11th-grade students.
- Student participation is limited to two academic years.

Minn. Laws (1988), Ch. 718
- Adults 21 years of age or older may participate in the program.

Minn. Laws (1989), Ch. 329, Sec. 11
- Students must return all textbooks and equipment to the school district.

Minn. Laws (1991), Ch. 265, Art. 2, Sec. 7-9
- Private non-profit two-year trade and technical schools granting associate degrees become eligible for participation.
- Districts 40 or more miles from an eligible postsecondary school must offer an advanced course for postsecondary credit if one or more students request it.
- Funding formula is changed which significantly affects the amount of money school districts and postsecondary institutions receive for participating students.
- Transportation aid is provided for low-income students.

Minn. Laws (1992), Ch. 499, Art. 9, Sec. 6
- Districts may contract with postsecondary schools for postsecondary courses and receive full funding for students who participate in them.

Minn. Laws (1993), Ch. 224, Art. 9, Sec. 23
- The number of postsecondary credits that equal one full year of high school is reduced from 9 to 7 quarter credits and from 6 to 4 semester credits.

Minn. Laws (1994), Ch. 647
- Opportunities industrialization centers become eligible to participate.
- Districts' reimbursement is based on instructional hours.

Minn. Laws (1995), 1st Spec. Sess., Ch. 3, Art. 7-8
- Districts may be eligible for replacement aid.
- Study is requested.

Minn. Laws (1995), Ch. 212, Art. 2, Sec. 3
- Postsecondary schools are prohibited from soliciting students based on money.
- Remedial courses become ineligible for reimbursement.

full funding for each secondary student in the higher education appropriations process.[5]

Since the 1992-93 school year, school districts have received 12 percent of general education revenue for secondary students attending postsecondary schools full time. For part-time students, they have received a portion of their general education revenue based upon the number of instructional hours students are in high school. Postsecondary institutions have received a flat rate per credit ($80.08 per quarter credit and $120.12 per semester credit for the 1994-95 school year) for participating students, plus an additional amount per student, where appropriate.

Third, the 1992 Legislature amended the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program to permit school districts to enter into contracts with postsecondary schools directly, thereby avoiding the payment system set up through the Department of Education.[6] Under these contracts, postsecondary schools may offer courses in the high school or secondary students may take courses at postsecondary schools. School districts that have contractual arrangements with postsecondary schools pay postsecondary schools at agreed-upon rates for those courses that their students take.

Enrolling in the Program

Postsecondary schools control students' access to the program.

Figure 1.2 describes the general process that students go through to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. As shown, postsecondary schools control access; secondary schools have no direct control over students' decisions to participate in the program.

To apply, interested students and their parents complete an application form, available at secondary or postsecondary schools, attesting that they have received information about the program that their school district is required to furnish and that they understand their responsibilities as program participants. Students take the form, along with a high school transcript, to a postsecondary school and apply for admission.

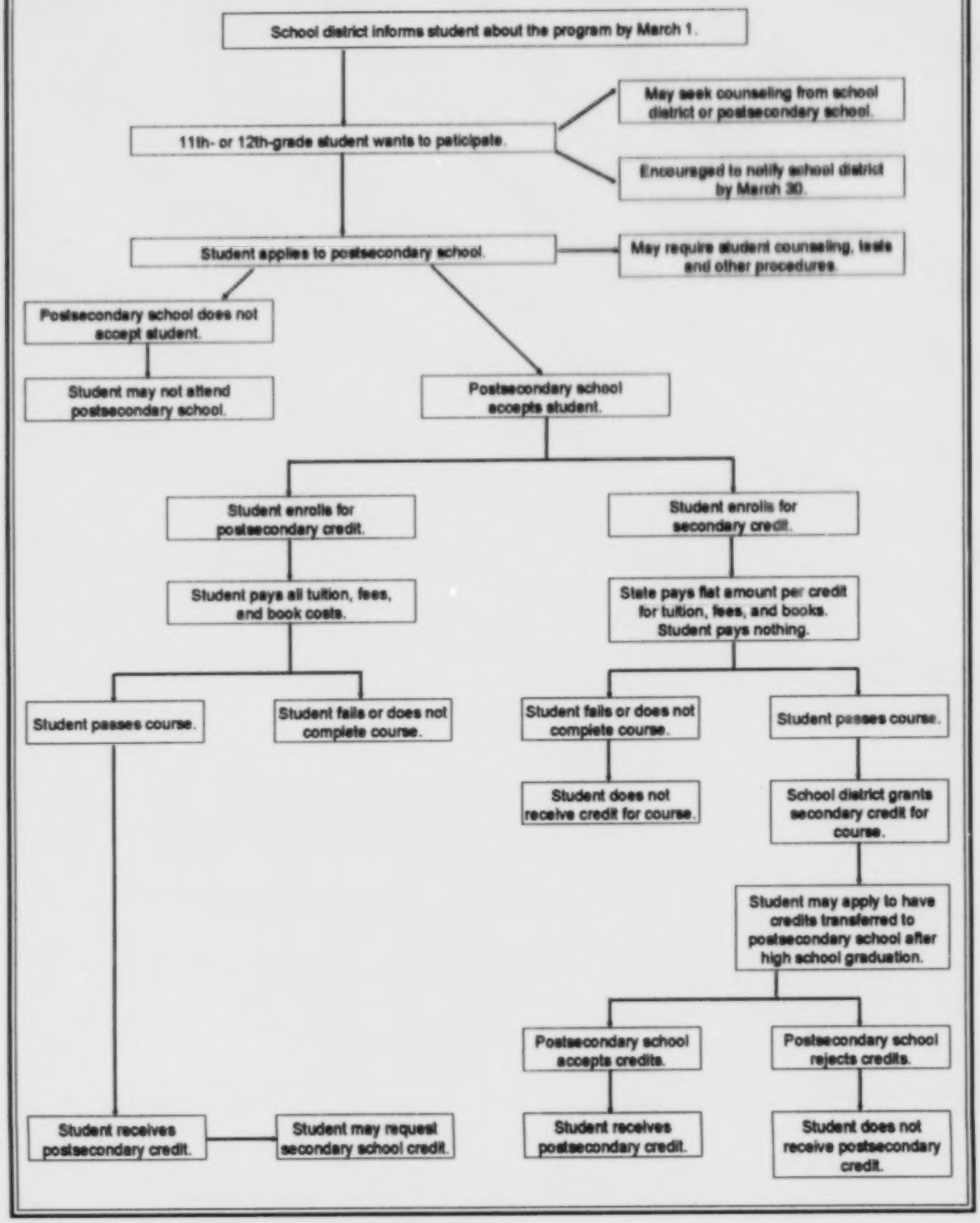
Each postsecondary school sets its own admission requirements but must give priority status to postsecondary students before admitting secondary students. Once accepted, students can enroll for either secondary or postsecondary credit.[7] Students must pay all tuition and required fees if they enroll for postsecondary credit only. On the other hand, the state pays all tuition, required fees, and book expenses for students enrolling for secondary credit. Students must provide their own transportation to and from the postsecondary school, although financial aid is available for low-income families.

5 *Minn. Laws* (1991), Ch. 265, Art. 9.

6 *Minn. Laws* (1992), Ch. 499, Art. 9, Sec. 9.

7 All students enrolled in the program during the 1994-95 school were enrolled for secondary credit.

Figure 1.2: How the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Process Works


School district informs student about the program by March 1.
May seek counseling from school district or postsecondary school.
11th- or 12th-grade student wants to paticipate.
Encouraged to notify school district by March 30.
Student applies to postsecondary school.
May require student counseling, tests and other procedures.
Postsecondary school does not accept student.
Student may not attend postsecondary school.
Postsecondary school accepts student.
Student enrolls for postsecondary credit.
Student enrolls for secondary credit.
Student pays all tuition, fees, and book costs.
State pays flat amount per credit for tuition, fees, and books. Student pays nothing.
Student passes course.
Student fails or does not complete course.
Student fails or does not complete course.
Student passes course.
Student does not receive credit for course.
School district grants secondary credit for course.
Student may apply to have credits transferred to postsecondary school after high school graduation.
Postsecondary school accepts credits.
Postsecondary school rejects credits.
Student receives postsecondary credit.
Student may request secondary school credit.
Student receives postsecondary credit.
Student does not receive postsecondary credit.

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To receive secondary credit, students must successfully complete the course. School districts determine the comparability and amount of secondary credit to be awarded for postsecondary classes, but districts cannot require students to take more than seven quarter or four semester postsecondary credits to receive one year of secondary credit.[8] Postsecondary courses are considered comparable to secondary requirements if the curriculum of the postsecondary course falls within the guidelines for courses in the same subject area as required by the local school district.

Students may appeal, in writing, to the Commissioner of the Children, Families and Learning whenever there is a dispute about the appropriateness of a course or the amount of credit awarded. When students appeal decisions, local school districts must demonstrate that postsecondary courses are outside the general required subject area. Since the program was implemented in 1985, few appeals have been filed.

Postsecondary courses that secondary students complete become part of their secondary and postsecondary school transcripts. Students attending the same public postsecondary school after high school graduation automatically receive full postsecondary credit for those courses. When students enroll in a different postsecondary school, particularly a private or out-of-state school, the credits may not transfer.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

All juniors and seniors enrolled in a Minnesota public school and adults 21 years of age or more returning to school under the High School Graduation Incentives Act to complete their high school program are eligible to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.[9] This includes adults who have received less than 14 years of education, have completed the equivalent of the 10th grade but not the requirements for a high school diploma, and are eligible for unemployment compensation, income maintenance or support services, or subsidies under the displaced homemaker program, state wage subsidy program, or any federal Jobs Training Partnership Act programs. Students who are attending a Minnesota high school under a cultural exchange program are not eligible to participate.

Minnesota statutes limit student participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program to two academic years.[10] Students who first enrolled in the program at the start of their junior year may participate for two years; those enrolling for the first time at the start of their senior year may participate for one year. Stu-

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8 Minn. Stat. §123.3514, Subd.5.

9 The 1987 Legislature established the High School Graduation Incentives program to encourage all Minnesota students who have had difficulty succeeding in traditional educational settings to enroll in alternative programs to complete their high school education. In 1988, the Legislature made certain adults enrolled in these programs eligible to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

10 Minn. Stat. §123.3514, Subd. 4c.

dents who begin participating during the school year have their total eligible time reduced proportionately.

Students receiving special education services are eligible to participate in the program. Students who have not successfully completed their senior year and who are continuing to work toward their diploma can participate, as long as they have not previously used up their time in the program. In addition, high school students who have completed the coursework necessary for graduation but who have not yet received a diploma are still eligible to participate in the program.

Student Participation Over Time

Data collected by the Department of Children, Families and Learning show that:

- **Of the 112,989 juniors and seniors enrolled in public schools during the 1994-95 school year, 6,671, or about 6 percent, took courses at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**[11]

Table 1.1 shows student enrollment in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program from 1986 through 1995. We have not directly compared the number and percent of students who were enrolled in the program before 1992-93 to the number and percent enrolled thereafter for two reasons. First, from 1985-86 through

About 6 percent of students participated in the program in 1994-95.

Table 1.1: Student Participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1985-95

School Year	Total Number of Junior and Seniors	Program Participants	Percent Enrolled
1985-86	115,532	3,528	3.0%
1986-87	117,732	3,953	3.4
1987-88	118,224	5,041	4.3
1988-89	111,857	5,884	5.3
1989-90	104,649	5,874	5.6
1990-91	102,403	6,684	6.5
1991-92	104,830	7,558	7.2
1992-93[1]	107,047	5,457	5.1%
1993-94	110,601	6,232	5.6
1994-95	112,989	6,671	5.9

Source: Department of Children, Families and Learning.

[1]From the 1985-86 school year through the 1991-92 school year, program participant figures include students taking postsecondary courses taught in high schools and students taking courses at postsecondary schools. Since 1992-93, only students taking courses at postsecondary schools for whom the Department of Children, Families and Learning makes reimbursements are shown.

11 Program participation rates are based on the total number of juniors and seniors enrolled in Minnesota school districts on October 1, 1994. They do not include adults who are 21 years of age or more, although they are included in the total number of students who participated in the program. As we discuss in Chapter 2, 1 percent of Postsecondary Enrollment Options participants were 21 years of age or more.

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1991-92, the student participation data that the department collected included students taking postsecondary courses in secondary schools as well as those taking courses at postsecondary schools. However, since 1992, the department's data have only included students who took courses at postsecondary schools whose costs were reimbursed by the department. Second, the 1992 Legislature amended the law to allow school districts to contract with postsecondary schools to provide courses on campus. Because school districts reimburse postsecondary schools rather than the Department of Children, Families and Learning, these students do not show up in the department's data.

Many students take postsecondary courses under contractual arrangements.

As shown in Table 1.1, enrollment in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program increased steadily from 3 percent of eligible students in 1985-86 to 7 percent in 1991-92. Since the 1992-93 school year, participation appears to have grown more slowly, going from 5 to 6 percent of eligible students. In our survey of postsecondary school administrators, we found that approximately 3,000 students took courses at postsecondary schools under contracts with secondary schools during the 1994-95 school year. Because these students are not included in the department's data, we think that:

- **The overall number of high school students who took courses at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year may be underestimated by as much as 50 percent.**

We found that high school seniors have participated in the program at a much higher rate than juniors, accounting for approximately three-fourths of all participants each year. As we discuss later, higher participation rates by seniors may be due partly to lower admission requirements that postsecondary schools have adopted for them.

In addition, we found that:

- **Over time, students have increased their involvement in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program by participating longer and by taking more postsecondary credits.**

While fewer high school juniors than seniors have taken part in the program, the percentage of seniors who participated in both their junior and senior years has increased over time. In 1986-87, 42 percent of the seniors who were enrolled in the program also participated the previous year as juniors; by 1991-92, that percentage had increased to 59 percent. Between 1992-93 and 1994-95, the percentage of seniors who participated in the program for two years increased from 49 to 69 percent.

We also found that students have been taking slightly more postsecondary credits each year. As shown in Table 1.2, from 1985-86 through 1991-92, about one-half of the students took 12 or more credits each year. Between 1992-93 and 1994-95, the percentage of students who took 12 or more credits increased from 61 to 64 percent.

Table 1.2: Postsecondary Credits Taken, 1985-95

School Year	Number of Credits Taken: 1-5 Credits	6-9 Credits	10-11 Credits	12 or More Credits	Total Participants
1985-86	979	562	184	1,803	3,528
1986-87	1,190	542	170	2,051	3,953
1987-88	1,555	736	316	2,434	5,041
1988-89	1,879	769	349	2,887	5,884
1989-90	1,708	792	495	2,879	5,874
1990-91	1,983	872	567	3,262	6,684
1991-92	1,867	1,069	677	3,945	7,558
1992-93[1]	1,132	746	276	3,303	5,457
1993-94	1,192	831	310	3,899	6,232
1994-95	1,202	898	277	4,294	6,671

Source: Department of Children, Families and Learning.

[1]From the 1985-86 school year through the 1991-92 school year, program participant figures include students taking postsecondary courses taught in high schools and students taking courses at postsecondary schools. Since 1992-93, only students taking courses at postsecondary schools and for whom the Department of Children, Families and Learning makes reimbursements are shown.

Since the program was implemented in 1985, we found that:

- **Most of the students participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program through the Department of Children, Families and Learning have taken courses offered by public two-year schools.**

Nearly 60 percent of participants attend two-year schools.

As shown in Table 1.3, the majority of participants (nearly 60 percent) enrolled in courses offered by community or technical colleges. During the 1994-95 school year, 1,208 secondary students (18 percent) attended public technical colleges through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, 3,090 (45 percent) went to community colleges, 1,417 (21 percent) enrolled in the University of Minnesota, 576 (8 percent) attended state universities, 536 (8 percent) took courses at private colleges, and 21 students (less than 1 percent) attended private, nonprofit vocational schools.

Since the 1992-93 school year, the percentage of students enrolled in community colleges has grown by about 6 percent, while the percentage of students enrolled in each of the other systems decreased slightly.

Program Alternatives

As noted earlier, students and schools do not necessarily have to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program through the Department of Children, Families and Learning to take tuition-free postsecondary courses, either on site or at postsecondary schools.

Table 1.3: Student Participants in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program by Type of School Attended, 1985-95

School Year	Technical Colleges	Community Colleges	State Universities	University of Minnesota	Private Colleges	Private Vocational Schools[1]	Total[2]
1985-86	386	1,810	639	623	231	0	3,671
1986-87	501	1,884	568	854	250	0	4,057
1987-88	682	2,110	604	1,529	276	0	5,201
1988-89	910	2,586	574	1,699	344	0	6,113
1989-90	1,078	2,330	639	1,682	366	0	6,095
1990-91	1,352	2,532	705	1,958	383	0	6,930
1991-92	1,448	3,233	741	2,094	379	4	7,899
1992-93[3]	1,134	2,225	524	1,284	506	5	5,678
1993-94	1,206	2,770	482	1,533	572	10	6,573
1994-95	1,208	3,090	576	1,417	536	21	6,848

Source: Department of Children, Families and Learning.

[1]Minnesota statutes did not permit private non-profit technical schools to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program until 1991.

[2]Students who enrolled in more than one type of postsecondary school in any year were counted for each type of school. Therefore, the number of participants by system is greater than the overall number of students participating in the program.

[3]From the 1985-86 school year through the 1991-92 school year, program participant figures include students taking postsecondary courses taught in high schools and students taking courses at postsecondary schools. Since 1992-93, only students taking courses at postsecondary schools for whom the Department of Children, Families and Learning makes reimbursements are shown.

Minnesota statutes permit school districts to contract directly with postsecondary schools to provide courses in the high school. These first-year college courses are usually taught by specially-trained high school teachers under the supervision of postsecondary staff. Often referred to as "college-in-the-classroom" or "concurrent enrollment," some of these arrangements predate the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

Minnesota statutes also permit school districts to enter into contracts with postsecondary schools to provide courses to secondary students at postsecondary campuses. In these instances:

- **School districts may have a financial incentive to contract with postsecondary schools to enroll students in courses on campus rather than participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program through the Department of Children, Families and Learning.**

When districts contract for courses taught at postsecondary schools, students simply enroll in postsecondary courses alongside regularly admitted postsecondary students. There is virtually no difference between students who enroll in courses at postsecondary schools through contracts and those that enroll through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. However, school districts rather than the Department of Children, Families and Learning reimburse postsecondary schools at an agreed-upon rate. Although some districts contract for the same amount of

reimbursement as provided in statute, they retain all of the remaining general education revenue, not just an amount based upon the number of instructional hours students are in the high school.

In addition, a number of nationally recognized programs, such as the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, offer rigorous courses that are taught by secondary teachers and may provide postsecondary credit to students who pass national exams.[12] The Advanced Placement program, administered by the College Board, specifies the curriculum and offers exams for 29 courses in 16 subject areas. These courses are equivalent to introductory college courses, require considerably more time and work than other secondary courses but afford students the opportunity to explore a subject area in more depth.

The International Baccalaureate diploma program is a rigorous, comprehensive program of courses offered during students' last two years of high school. Diploma candidates select three subject areas to study in-depth over a two-year period and three additional areas to study more broadly, plus they take a theory of knowledge course that is designed to stimulate critical thinking. In addition to sitting for internationally-developed exams in all subject areas, students must research and write an essay in one subject area and participate in a community service project.

We found that:

- **Besides the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, most secondary schools have provided their students with other opportunities to earn postsecondary credit in their own schools.**

More students took Advanced Placement courses in secondary schools than took postsecondary courses on college campuses.

According to data collected in our survey, 65 percent of secondary schools provided at least one course on site where students could earn postsecondary credit during the 1994-95 school year. As shown in Table 1.4, 45 percent of high school administrators reported that they taught at least one Advanced Placement course, 38 percent provided postsecondary courses on site under contracts with postsecondary schools, and 11 percent had other arrangements by which students could earn postsecondary credit for secondary courses, including the International Baccalaureate program.

More students were enrolled in Advanced Placement courses than in postsecondary courses through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program and nearly as many were enrolled in on-site postsecondary classes or in other arrangements during the 1994-95 school year. In our survey, secondary school administrators reported that approximately 10,700 students were enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, 5,700 students took postsecondary courses taught in the secondary school under contracts, and another 5,400 students took postsecondary courses in high

12 The extent to which students receive postsecondary credit for these courses depends on the results of national exams; postsecondary schools have their own criteria regarding the grades that students must earn.

Table 1.4: Postsecondary-Level Courses Taught in Secondary Schools, 1994-95

	Type of Course Arrangement								
	Advanced Placement			Contracts With Postsecondary Schools			Other Arrangements[1]		
	High Schools	Alternative Schools	Total	High Schools	Alternative Schools	Total	High Schools	Alternative Schools	Total
Percent teaching	45%	3%	37%	38%	8%	33%	11%	1%	9%
Mean number of courses	3	3	3	4	9	4	6	4	6
Median number of courses	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	4	3
Enrollment in courses	1,526	133	10,659	5,598	139	5,737	5,387	17	5,404
Mean enrollment	74	67	74	49	23	47	174	17	172
Median enrollment	38	67	38	38	17	35	41	17	41

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Secondary School Survey (n = 401), 1995.

[1]Includes International Baccalaureate program and articulation agreements.

schools through other arrangements during the 1994-95 school year.[13] In comparison, 6,671 students took courses at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year.

Since the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program and other educational reforms took effect, we found that:

- **The number of Minnesota high schools offering Advanced Placement courses has increased steadily along with the percentage of high school juniors and seniors taking Advanced Placement tests.**

The percentage of Minnesota juniors and seniors who took one or more Advanced Placement tests rose from 2 to 6 percent between 1985 and 1995, and the number of schools offering Advanced Placement courses increased from 87 to 193.[14] At the same time, as Table 1.5 shows, students' average score fell from 3.07 to 2.79, which is below the national average of 2.92. The lowest passing score is 3 on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest.

POSTSECONDARY SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

This section looks at the number and type of postsecondary schools that have participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program since 1985. First, we discuss the criteria that the Department of Children, Families and Learning uses to

13 These numbers may be duplicated counts in that the same students may be counted in more than one category.

14 Despite students' increased participation in the testing program, Minnesota's student participation rate in the program is less than half the national average. According to data compiled by the College Board, the number of exams taken in Minnesota per 1,000 juniors and seniors was 46 in 1993 and 51 in 1994. Nationally, these figures were 106 and 116, respectively. We made essentially the same finding in our 1988 report, *High School Education.*

Table 1.5: Average Advanced Placement Test Scores for Public School Students in Minnesota and the Nation, 1986-95

Year	Minnesota Average Test Score	U.S. Average Test Score
1986	3.07	3.05
1987	3.03	3.04
1988	3.04	3.03
1989	3.02	3.01
1990	3.09	3.03
1991	2.97	2.97
1992	3.03	3.01
1993	2.94	2.96
1994	2.98	3.02
1995	2.79	2.92

Source: College Board.

determine whether individual schools are eligible to participate in the program. Then we examine the admissions criteria that schools use to enroll secondary students.

Eligibility Criteria

The Commissioner of Children, Families and Learning reviews postsecondary school eligibility.

Not all postsecondary schools in Minnesota are eligible to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program and not all eligible schools choose to participate. According to Minnesota statutes, eligible postsecondary schools include all public, postsecondary institutions; private, non-profit two-year trade and technical schools granting associate degrees; opportunities industrialization centers accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities; and private, residential two-or four-year liberal arts degree-granting colleges and universities in Minnesota.[15]

To participate in the program, postsecondary schools must make a written request to the Commissioner of Children, Families and Learning, submitting their mission statement, course catalog, and any other information that the commissioner may require. An advisory committee makes recommendations to the commissioner based upon the criteria shown in Figure 1.3. We found that:

- **The state's criteria for postsecondary school participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program are inconsistent with other state programs designed to encourage student participation in higher education.**

15 Minn. Stat. §123.3514, Subd. 4. Opportunities industrialization centers are private, non-profit vocational schools.

Figure 1.3: Eligibility Criteria for Postsecondary Schools to Participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program

- All public postsecondary schools
- All private, nonprofit, two-year trade and technical schools granting associate degrees
- All opportunities industrialization centers accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
- All private, residential, two and four year, liberal arts, degree-granting colleges and universities that are:

  1) residential, and

  2) liberal arts defined by *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* as the "studies (as language, philosophy, history, literature, abstract science) especially in a college or university that are presumed to provide chiefly general knowledge and to develop the general intellectual capacities (as reason or judgment) as opposed to professional, vocational or technical studies," and

  3) not an institution, or department or branch of an institution whose program is specifically for education of students (a) to prepare them to become ministers of religion, (b) to enter upon some other religious vocation, or (c) to prepare them to teach theological subjects, and

  4) an institution which, although it may provide for the scholarly study of religion as a discipline of knowledge in a manner similar to that provided for any field of study, does not require a student (a) to take courses based upon a particular set of religious, beliefs, (b) to receive instruction intended to propagate or promote any religious beliefs, (c) to participate in religious activities, (d) to maintain affiliation with a particular church or religious organization, or (e) to attest to any particular religious beliefs, and

  5) an institution granting an associate degree and/or higher degree.

Source: Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1995.

Minnesota statutes and the department's criteria are inconsistent with criteria used by the Higher Education Services Office to determine school eligibility for the State Grant program, which provides need-based grants to postsecondary students who attend approved schools in Minnesota. Eligibility criteria for the State Grant program rely more heavily on accrediting or licensing agencies or associations. To participate in the State Grant program, schools must: (a) be located in Minnesota, (b) offer at least one academic or vocational program that is at least eight weeks long and involves at least 12 credits or 300 clock hours, and (c) be accredited, licensed, or approved by an appropriate government agency or association. In contrast, the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program does not generally

consider accreditation or licensure in its criteria to determine which schools may participate.

Some private four-year colleges with a religious focus that are ineligible for the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program participate in the State Grant program. We found at least five private colleges that would like to participate in the program, but: (a) were discouraged from applying because of their religious affiliation; (b) were deemed ineligible because they were not residential; or (c) had inappropriate missions according to the Department of Children, Families and Learning. Yet all five of these schools participate in the State Grant program.

Some private schools that participate in the State Grant program are not eligible for the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

Public technical colleges, which accounted for 17 percent of program participants in 1994-95, are eligible to participate in the program, but private, for-profit technical schools, which offer the same types of programs, are not. In contrast, both public and private technical schools can participate in the State Grant program. Likewise, some private four-year colleges with a religious affiliation are not permitted to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, but do participate in the State Grant program.

Finally, Minnesota statutes require that private colleges and universities have residential facilities for students to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, even though, according to our survey of postsecondary schools, only 6 percent of secondary students actually lived on campus during the 1994-95 school year. In contrast, public schools do not have to be residential to participate in the program. As we discuss later, the majority of secondary students who took courses at postsecondary schools attended public technical and community colleges, which do not have student housing.

Also, the state's criteria for participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program do not treat like schools consistently. To participate in the program, private colleges must have a liberal arts orientation, evidenced by course offerings providing general knowledge as opposed to professional, vocational, or technical courses. Yet public colleges and universities do not need to have a liberal arts orientation to participate.

We believe that it would be consistent with one of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program's basic goals, that is, to provide students with a wider variety of options, to allow any state grant-approved postsecondary school to participate in the program, if desired. Therefore, we recommend that:

- **The Legislature should consider amending *Minn. Stat.* §123.3514 so that private colleges and for-profit vocational schools that are eligible for the State Grant program may also enroll secondary students through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

This would also eliminate duplication of effort by state agencies. Instead of an advisory committee of the Department of Children, Families and Learning screening interested schools itself, the department could rely on work that is currently being done by the Higher Education Services Office.

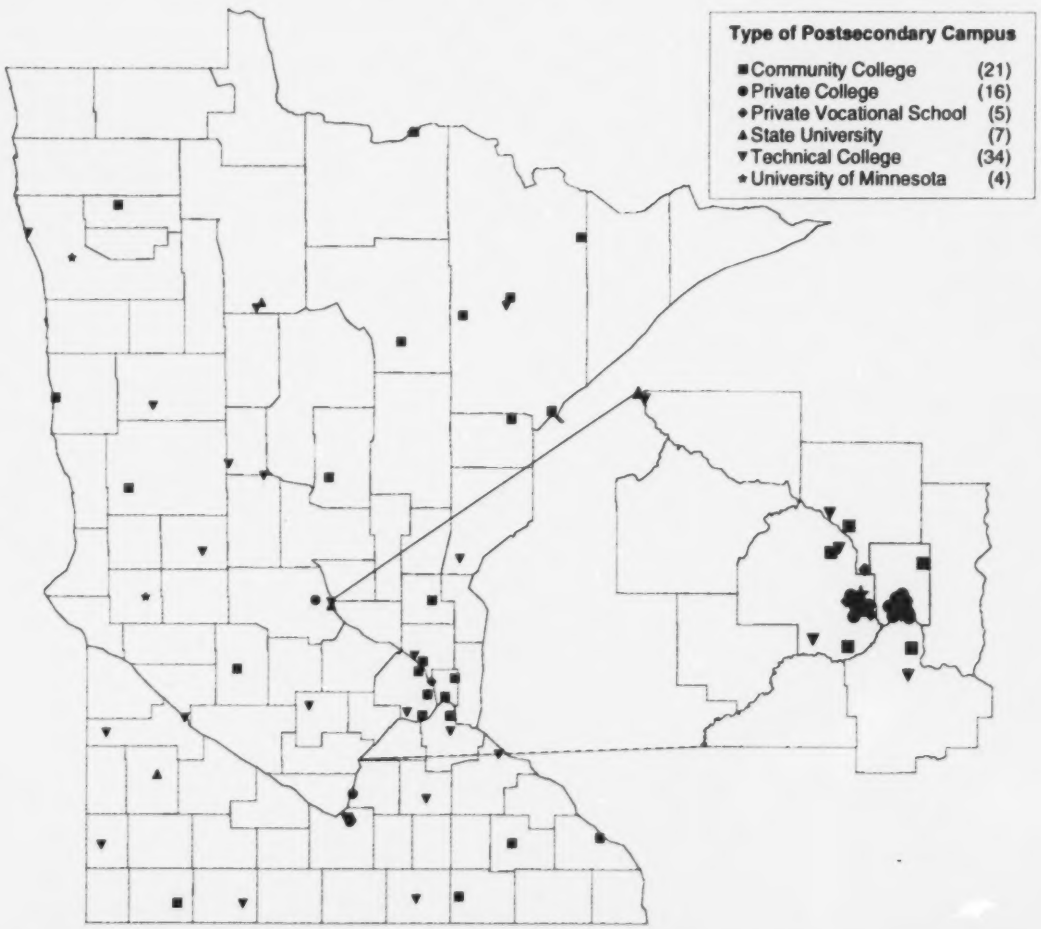
Eligible Schools

Since the 1985-86 school year, the number of postsecondary campuses that have participated in the program has remained fairly constant. We found that:

- **During the 1994-95 school year, 87 postsecondary campuses throughout the state enrolled secondary students through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

As shown in Figure 1.4, these included: 4 University of Minnesota campuses; 7 state universities; 16 private college campuses; 5 nonprofit, technical schools; 21 community college campuses; and 34 technical college campuses.

Figure 1.4: Location of Postsecondary Campuses Where Postsecondary Program Participants Took Classes, 1994-95



Not all public schools participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program through the Department of Children, Families and Learning. Four technical college campuses have chosen instead to contract with local school districts to permit secondary students to enroll in postsecondary courses at their campuses.

In addition, two private four-year colleges have chosen not to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Admissions staff from these schools told us that their decisions not to participate helped the local high school keep its academic program as strong as possible. They said that permitting secondary students to attend their colleges could eliminate or seriously affect the high school's advanced math and English classes as well as its foreign language and fine arts programs. In addition, the colleges told us that accepting even a small portion of their local school's public funding would not be in the best interest of the community as a whole, considering the limited availability of funds for public education.

In addition to these two schools, we found at least two other private colleges that are seriously considering dropping out of the program entirely. As we discuss later in Chapter 3, private college administrators were generally less satisfied than other postsecondary administrators with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

Admission Requirements

As indicated earlier, postsecondary schools control access; secondary schools have no direct control over students' decisions to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Each postsecondary school sets its own admission requirements for secondary students. We asked postsecondary schools whether their admissions criteria for secondary students to take classes on campus were lower, about the same, or higher than their criteria for regularly admitted first-year postsecondary students. We found that:

- **Postsecondary schools, except for the public technical colleges, generally had more stringent admission requirements for secondary students than for postsecondary students.**

As shown in Table 1.6, all of the private, nonprofit vocational schools and from 71 to 89 percent of the community colleges, state universities, University of Minnesota campuses, and private colleges represented in our survey had higher admission requirements for secondary students. In contrast, only 25 percent of the technical college administrators indicated that their admission standards were higher for secondary students in 1994-95.

We examined the postsecondary schools' admission standards for secondary students and found that:

- **Private colleges in general had the highest admission requirements for secondary students.**

Table 1.6: Postsecondary Standards for Program Participants Compared with Standards for Regularly Admitted First-Year Postsecondary Students, 1994-95

	Admission Standards			Academic Progress Standards		
	Lower	About the Same	Higher	Lower	About the Same	Higher
Technical colleges	0%	75%	25%	0%	93%	7%
Community colleges	0	11	89	0	89	11
State universities	0	29	71	0	100	0
University of Minnesota	0	25	75	0	50	50
Private colleges	0	29	71	7	93	0
Private vocational schools	0	0	100	0	100	0
Total	0%	46%	54%	1%	91%	8%

Note: The questions were: (1) "During the 1994-95 school year, were your admissions criteria for secondary students to take classes on campus lower, about the same, or higher than for regularly admitted first-year postsecondary students?" and (2) "During the 1994-95 school year, were your standards for satisfactory academic progress for secondary students on campus lower, about the same, or higher than for regularly admitted first-year postsecondary students?"

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995.

Some private four-year colleges required students to be in the top 10 to 15 percent of their class and to have written letters of recommendation from their high school to be admitted during the 1994-95 school year. St. John's University required that high school seniors who enrolled in college part time have a 3.7 grade point average in college preparatory courses plus a written letter of recommendation from their high school; full-time secondary students needed a 3.9 grade point average, passing scores on college placement tests, and a personal interview.

The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities accepted all secondary students in the top 15 percent of their class. Others were accepted on a space-available basis, after screening based on test scores, personal interviews, and written goal statements. At the University of Minnesota-Duluth, secondary students generally had to be in the top 20 percent of their class.

In contrast, community colleges generally required that juniors be in the top one-third of their class and seniors the top one-half, and that they score satisfactorily on placement tests for the 1994-95 school year. With the exception of Winona State University, most state universities required that juniors be in the top one-third of their class and seniors the top one-half. Winona generally required that juniors be in the top 15 percent of their class and seniors in the top 25 percent. Finally, technical colleges generally required that students have a "C" or 2.00 grade point average to participate and that they take reading and math aptitude tests.

Recently, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system revised its policy on the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program to require that secondary enrollment in state universities and community colleges generally be limited to

juniors in the upper one-third of their class and to seniors in the upper one-half.[16] However, the policy is silent on technical college admission standards. In our opinion, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities office needs to address admission standards for secondary students in technical colleges. As we show in Chapter 2, secondary students who took courses at technical colleges were generally less successful in their coursework than secondary students in other systems during the 1994-95 school year. And, as Chapter 3 discusses, 75 percent of the technical college administrators that we surveyed reported that postsecondary schools needed to be more selective about program admission.

Some technical colleges have been raising their admission requirements for secondary students.

We found that some technical colleges have already been revising their admission requirements for students participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. For example, since 1995, South Central Technical College has required secondary students to have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. In addition, it has required students and their parents or guardians to meet with a college counselor. A new policy adopted by the technical colleges in Hutchinson and Willmar in June 1995 requires that secondary students demonstrate, by coursework taken in high school, grade point average, class rank, or test scores, that they can complete college coursework at a "C" level or higher. All applicants must also meet with a counselor before being accepted.

Once admitted, almost all schools required that secondary and postsecondary students meet the same academic progress standards to remain in good standing. However, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities required that secondary students maintain a higher grade point average than regularly admitted students to remain in the program.

STUDENT NOTIFICATION AND SERVICES

In the following sections, we discuss how secondary and postsecondary schools informed students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program for the 1994-95 school year and the services that they provided to interested students. At the same time, we examine how satisfied students and parents were with these aspects of the program.

Notification Methods

As discussed earlier, Minnesota statutes require that school districts provide all 10th- and 11th-grade students with information about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. We asked secondary schools about the methods that they used to notify students and parents about the program for the 1994-95 school year and found that:

- **Secondary schools have used a variety of methods to inform students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

16 Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board Policy 3.5, *Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program*, amended September 20, 1995.

As shown in Table 1.7, 88 percent said that they sent special written materials about the program to students who asked for them and 76 percent sent them to parents who asked. Secondary counselors played an important role in information dissemination; 82 percent of the secondary administrators indicated that their counselors suggested the program individually to students. Teachers also played an important role in that 67 percent of the administrators said that teachers sug-

Table 1.7: Secondary Schools' Methods for Informing Students and Parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95

Method	Percent Who Said They Used Each Method: High Schools	Alternative Schools	Total
The program was described in parent-student handbook	49%	21%	45%
The program was described in course registration materials	60	32	56
Special written materials about the program were displayed for students to take	56	54	56
Special written materials about the program were sent to all parents	24	8	22
Special written materials about the program were sent to those parents who asked	79	60	76
Special written materials were given to all students	30	22	29
Special written materials were given to those students who asked	89	85	88
Special meetings were held to inform all students of the program	32	46	35
The program was mentioned in meetings for college-bound students	66	41	62
High school counselors suggested the program to students individually	81	86	82
Teachers suggested the program to students individually	58	97	67
Postsecondary staff came to the high school to meet with students	28	37	29
Postsecondary schools sent written information that was shared with individual students	54	62	56
The program was mentioned over the public announcement system	20	10	18
The program was described in the parent newsletter	45	21	41
Posters about the program were displayed in school	19	22	20
Press releases about the program were sent to the local news media	26	22	26
Mean number of notification methods	7.6	5.9	7.2
Median number of notification methods	8.0	6.0	7.0

Note: The question was, "Which of the following methods did your school use to inform students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program for the 1994-95 year?"

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools (n = 401), 1995.

Secondary school counselors play an important role in notifying students about the program.

gested the program to students. Over one-half said that they mentioned the program in meetings for college-bound students (62 percent), described it in course registration materials (56 percent), displayed special information about the program (56 percent), and shared written information that was sent by postsecondary schools (56 percent).

We found that fewer secondary schools said that they held special meetings to inform all students about the program (35 percent), routinely sent information about the program to all students (29 percent), or invited postsecondary staff into their schools to discuss the program with students (29 percent). Fewer still (22 percent) routinely sent all parents special written information about the program.[17]

Secondary teachers played a more important role in informing students of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in alternative schools than in high schools.[18] Ninety-seven percent of the alternative school directors surveyed indicated that teachers suggested the program individually to students compared with 58 percent of the high school administrators.

Although secondary schools are responsible primarily for informing students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, we also asked postsecondary schools about their methods for informing students and parents. We found that:

- **Postsecondary schools have largely worked through secondary schools to inform students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

As shown in Table 1.8, most postsecondary schools (83 percent) sent information on request. Over one-half (58 percent) sent written information about course availability to secondary counselors. Recruiters in slightly less than one-half of the schools (45 percent) mentioned the program in meetings with college-bound students.

Of all systems, the University of Minnesota notified students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in more ways than other systems. In addition to the three methods just listed, most of the university campuses also described the program in course registration materials and held special meetings at secondary schools. Private colleges and state universities used the fewest methods, an average of 2.0 and 2.3 respectively, to inform the public about the program.

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17 Secondary schools that indicated that they did not send special written materials about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program upon students' request were slightly more likely to indicate that they routinely sent program information to all students and invited postsecondary staff to their school to meet with interested students.

18 Alternative schools are nontraditional programs established to encourage students who have had problems in traditional high schools but who have not yet graduated from high school to do so. Alternative schools include area learning centers and other approved nontraditional programs that school districts either contract with or establish themselves. For the purposes of our analysis, we have classified charter schools as alternative schools.

Table 1.8: Postsecondary Institutions' Methods of Informing Students and Parents of Postsecondary Enrollment Options Availability on Campus, 1994-95

	Percent Who Said They Used Each Method:						
Method	Technical Colleges	Community Colleges	State Universities	University of Minnesota	Private Colleges	Private Vocational Schools	Overall
News media or newsletters	0%	17%	0%	25%	0%	40%	8%
Routine course registration materials	44	44	29	50	0	20	33
Special written materials displayed on campus for prospective students to take	18	28	14	25	14	20	20
Special written materials sent on request	79	94	100	75	79	60	83
Special meetings at secondary schools to inform students of the program	32	28	43	50	14	25	29
Recruiters mentioned in meetings with college-bound students	57	35	14	75	29	100	45
Postsecondary staff went to secondary schools to register students	0	17	0	25	0	20	7
Written information about course availability sent to secondary counselors	68	78	0	75	36	60	58
Posters or flyers about the program sent to secondary schools	7	0	14	25	14	20	9
Advertisements	0	0	0	0	0	20	1
Letters of invitation to select students	4	0	0	0	0	0	1
Special meetings on campus to inform secondary students of the program	18	12	14	25	0	0	12
Mean number of notification methods	3.3	3.6	2.3	4.8	2.0	3.8	3.1
n =	28	18	7	4	14	5	76

Note: The question was, "Which of the following methods did your school use to inform students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program on your campus for the 1994-95 school year?"

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995.

We asked a random sample of 300 students who took courses at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year how they learned about the program. As shown in Table 1.9, more than one-half of the students reported getting information about the program from their secondary school when they asked for it (55 percent) or personally from secondary counselors (55 percent), family (66 percent), or friends (74 percent). Sixty percent indicated that they received written information from postsecondary schools. When we asked students what their most helpful source of information was, we found that:

- **Personal contacts were students' most helpful source of information about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year.**

Table 1.9: Students' Assessment about How They Got Information about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95

Method	Percent Who Said They Got Information by Each Method:
Parent-student handbook	21%
Course registration materials	38
Special written materials on display for students to take	31
Information sent to all parents	18
Information sent to those parents who asked	19
Information sent to all students	22
Information sent to students who asked	55
Informational meetings for all students	31
Information meetings for college-bound students	39
High school counselors suggested the program to students individually	55
Teachers suggested the program to students individually	31
Postsecondary staff suggested the program to students individually	18
Postsecondary staff came to the high school to meet with students	16
Written information from postsecondary schools	60
The program was mentioned over the public announcement system	13
Posters in school	9
News media	13
Parents/Family	66
Friends/Students	74

Note: The question was, "I'm going to read some ways you might have gotten information about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program last year--the program allows high school juniors and seniors to take college courses for free. Please tell me if you got information about the program in any of these ways."

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Student Survey (n = 300), 1995, subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

Of the 300 students surveyed, 58 percent said that personal suggestions from counselors, family, or friends were most helpful. Fewer said that written information from their high school or postsecondary school (16 percent) or meetings at the high school (10 percent) were the most helpful. However, this varied by students' income level. Considerably more students whose total family income was less than $15,000 said that meetings at their high school were the most helpful source of information about the program.

Students and parents were generally satisfied with information about the program.

Like their children, parents also tended to rely on personal contacts for program information, according to our survey. The majority of parents said they learned about the program from their child (73 percent), family or friends (52 percent), or someone at the high school (50 percent). About two-fifths of the parents said that they received written information about the program from their child's high school and about one-fifth said that they received written information from a postsecondary school.

Yet, we found that:

- **The majority of parents with children participating in the program were satisfied with the amount of helpful information that they had about the program.**

Overall, 70 percent of the parents surveyed said that they were "somewhat" or "very satisfied" with the information they had about the program while 17 percent were "somewhat" or "very dissatisfied." However, as we discuss in Chapter 3, about one-fourth of parents and one-half of students who participated in the program said that the information that their high school provided to them was in need of "much" or "critical" improvement.

Staff Involvement

According to our survey of secondary school administrators, we found that:

- **Secondary school counselors and parents were most involved in helping students decide whether to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

As shown in Table 1.10, 96 percent of the secondary administrators who responded to our survey said that their counselors were involved in students' decisions and 97 percent said that parents were involved. Less than two-thirds of the respondents said that postsecondary counselors (62 percent) or instructors (25 percent) were involved in students' decisions.[19] In addition, 89 percent of the alternative school directors surveyed said that secondary teachers were involved in students' decision to participate; fewer high school administrators (60 percent) said this.

While most secondary school administrators said that their staff's level of involvement in helping students decide about participating in the program was about right, 17 percent said that secondary teachers needed to be more involved. Alternative school directors were more likely to call for greater involvement of postsecondary staff than high school administrators. According to our survey:

19 It should be noted that many secondary administrators said that they did not know whether postsecondary staff were involved in students' decision to participate. The percentages reported refer to those who could say one way or another. If we include the responses of those who said that they "didn't know" whether these staff were involved, the percentages who said that postsecondary counselors and instructors drop to 49 and 17 percent respectively. Thirty-one percent of the secondary administrators did not know whether postsecondary instructors were involved and 21 percent did not know whether postsecondary counselors were involved.

Table 1.10: Secondary Staff Assessment of Who Was Involved in Students' Decision to Participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95

Group Involved	Percent Who Said Each Group Was Involved: Regular High School	Alternative Schools	Total
Secondary teachers	60%	89%	66%
Secondary counselors	98	84	96
Secndary administrators	81	78	80
Postsecondary instructors	25	26	25
Postsecondary counselors	63	58	62
Parents/family	98	91	97
Friends	87	81	86

Note: The question was, "Please indicate, to the best of your knowledge, whether the following persons were generally involved in helping students at your school decide whether to take courses at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year."

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools (n = 401), 1995.

- **Alternative school directors said that postsecondary staff needed to be more involved in students' decisions to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

Forty-three percent of the alternative program directors said that postsecondary instructors were not involved enough in students' decision to participate and 38 percent said that postsecondary counselors were not involved enough. Also, one-third reported that parents of students enrolled in alternative schools needed to be more involved. These concerns are especially important given that, as we show in Chapter 2, secondary students from alternative schools had more problems successfully completing postsecondary courses.

Students said their parents and family were most involved in their decision to participate.

We asked students who helped them decide to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. As the data in Table 1.11 shows, students cited parents and family (93 percent), secondary counselors (76 percent), and friends and other students (73 percent). Although secondary school staff reported that secondary administrators were involved in students' decision to participate, only 20 percent of the students indicated that they were involved in their decision to participate in the program.

Eighty-five percent of the students whose parents were involved in their decision to participate said that their parents encouraged them to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Of those students who said postsecondary staff were involved (51 percent), 87 percent said that they encouraged them to participate. On the other hand, when secondary teachers, counselors, and administrators were involved in students' decision to participate, students indicated that they were slightly more likely to discourage them from participating.

Table 1.11: Student Assessment of Who Was Involved in Their Decision to Participate in Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95

Group Involved	Percent Who Said Each Group Was Involved	Percent of Those Involved Who: Encouraged	Discouraged
Secondary teachers	46%	73%	10%
Secondary counselors	76	72	8
Secondary administrators	20	71	13
Postsecondary staff	51	87	3
Parents/Family	93	85	1
Friends/Students	73	75	8

Note: The questions was, "A number of different people might have been involved in your decision to participate in the program last year. As I read the following list, please tell me whether each of these people was involved and, if so, whether they generally encouraged or discouraged you from participating, or stayed neutral?"

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Student Survey (n = 300), 1995, subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

A majority of parents said that their child's high school was encouraging about the program.

In our survey of students' parents, 60 percent of the parents reported that their child's high school was either "very" or "somewhat encouraging" about them participating in the program and 19 percent reported that the school was "somewhat" or "very discouraging." We found that parents' assessments of how encouraging their child's secondary school was was somewhat related to the type of postsecondary school that their child attended. For example, 50 percent of the parents whose children attended public technical colleges reported that the secondary school was "very encouraging" about their child participating in the program. In contrast, about 36 percent each of the parents whose children attended state universities, private colleges, and the University of Minnesota, and 28 percent of those with children at community colleges said that the secondary school was "very encouraging."

School Services

We asked secondary schools about various services that they might have provided to students who participated or were interested in participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. As shown in Table 1.12, secondary schools provided a variety of services to students. Almost all schools said that they had a specific person responsible for handling inquiries about the program and had counseling available.

However, survey data indicate that:

- **Secondary schools, especially high schools, did not have routine contact with the postsecondary schools that their students attended or with program participants' parents.**

Table 1.12: Services Provided to Program Participants by Secondary Schools, 1994-95

Services	Percent Who Said They Provided Each Service: High Schools	Alternative Schools	Total
Specific person for handling inquiries about the program	91%	93%	91%
General counseling on request in participating	98	99	98
Required counseling before students enrolled	75	70	74
Special efforts made to help students continue to participate in school activities	80	74	79
Routine on-going contact with postsecondary staff where students took courses	40	48	42
Contact on a case-by-case basis with postsecondary staff for students experiencing difficulty	59	55	59
Routine, on-going contact with parents of students who participated in the program	38	45	39
Contact on a case-by-case basis with parents of selected students experiencing difficulty	70	66	69

Note: The question was, "Which of the following services, if any, did your school provide to students who were interested or enrolled in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program during the 1994-95 school year?"

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools (n = 401), 1995.

As shown, less than one-half of secondary schools reported that they had routine, on-going contact with either postsecondary staff where students have taken courses or with these students' parents. When students experienced problems, contact was more frequent. In these circumstances, 59 percent of secondary schools reported having contact with postsecondary schools and 69 percent reported that they contacted students' parents.

While postsecondary schools have little responsibility to inform students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, they share responsibility with secondary schools to help ensure that participants succeed once admitted. We asked postsecondary schools about the services that they provided to secondary students who took courses on their campus throughout the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. As shown in Table 1.13, we found that:

Table 1.13: Services Provided to Program Participants by Postsecondary Schools, 1994-95

	Percent Who Said They Provided Each Service:						
Services	Technical Colleges	Community Colleges	State Universities	University of Minnesota	Private Colleges	Private Vocational Schools	Overall
Specific person to help students in the program	74%	83%	100%	100%	71%	80%	80%
General counseling on request	96	100	100	100	86	100	96
Required counseling before students enrolled	79	83	86	75	77	100	81
Special efforts to help students participate in campus activities	7	6	17	50	8	60	14
Routine, on-going contact with secondary staff for participating students	44	72	57	75	42	60	55
Contact on a case-by-case basis with secondary staff for students experiencing difficulty	93	94	43	100	67	75	83
Routine on-going contact with parents of secondary students in the program	4	17	0	25	15	0	10
Contact on a case-by-case basis with parents of selected students experiencing difficulty	59	47	24	35	46	33	48
Periodic progress reports sent to students	74	44	29	100	64	75	62
Periodic progress reports sent to parents	19	11	0	25	7	0	12
Periodic progress reports sent to secondary staff	75	67	29	75	36	25	59
Special campus orientation	37	56	86	100	54	80	55
Special tutoring, mentoring, or other academic support	63	33	0	67	46	75	47
Warning letters to students when postsecondary grades fall below a certain level	78	72	29	100	64	50	69
Mean number of services	7.9	7.9	6.0	10.3	6.6	7.6	7.6
n =	28	18	7	4	14	5	76

Note: The question was, "Which of the following services, if any, did your campus provide to secondary students who took courses on your campus through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program during the 1994-95 school year?"

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995.

- **Postsecondary schools provided a wide variety of services to program participants.**

Nearly all of the postsecondary schools surveyed said that they provided general counseling for students upon request. Eighty-three percent said that they contacted secondary school staff when students experienced difficulty and 81 percent said that they required counseling before students could enroll. Sixty-two percent said that they sent periodic progress reports to students and 59 percent said that they sent them to secondary staff. However, few postsecondary administrators (12

percent) said that they sent periodic progress reports to students' parents or had any other routine contact with parents (10 percent).

Participants in technical colleges were least likely to meet with a postsecondary counselor before starting classes.

We asked student participants whether they met with a postsecondary counselor before they started their classes. Although the majority of students reported that they did, this varied by the type of postsecondary school. Students who attended public technical colleges and state universities were the least likely to have received counseling. Forty-three percent of the secondary students who attended public technical colleges and 40 percent at state universities said that they did not meet with a postsecondary counselor compared with 20 percent of the secondary students at various University of Minnesota campuses, 18 percent at community colleges, and 7 percent at private colleges.

SUMMARY

The purpose of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program is twofold: "to promote rigorous academic pursuits and to provide a variety of options to high school students by encouraging and enabling them to enroll in postsecondary courses." Besides the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, secondary schools have provided their students with additional opportunities to earn postsecondary credit in their own schools.

Postsecondary schools controlled student access to the program. Except for the public technical colleges, postsecondary schools generally had more stringent admission requirements for secondary students than for postsecondary students. Private colleges generally had the highest admission requirements for secondary students.

Overall, we found that secondary and postsecondary schools used a variety of methods to help ensure that students and parents were aware of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. While the majority of student participants and their parents said that they were satisfied with the overall amount of information, encouragement, and services that they received from schools, they also called for greater communication and coordination among secondary and postsecondary schools regarding student participation. In Chapter 3, we recommend such improvements based on additional findings presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

Program Participants

CHAPTER 2

In the previous chapter, we discussed how schools implemented the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program for the 1994-95 school year. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of student participation in the program for that year. Specifically, our research focused on the following questions:

- **To what extent has student participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Option program varied throughout the state, and what accounts for the variation? Has access been a problem?**
- **How many and what type of students have participated in the program and why?**
- **What types of courses have students taken at postsecondary schools and to what extent have they completed them successfully?**

Overall, our research suggests that it may be difficult for secondary schools to compete with postsecondary schools for students, especially when schools are located near one another. Our data show that, for outstate school districts and high schools, distance was the single most important factor that explained student participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. The closer an outstate school district or high school was to a city with a postsecondary school, the higher the percentage of students that enrolled in postsecondary courses. In the Twin Cities metropolitan area, no single factor helped explain much about program participation.

Although the statutory purposes of the program are to promote rigorous academic pursuits and to provide a variety of options to students, participants most frequently said that they took part in the program to get a head start on college credits and to save money. Once enrolled, secondary students generally did better in their postsecondary courses than regular first-year students, except at technical colleges, where they did somewhat worse.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION RATES

This section discusses student participation rates in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. We specifically examined how

participation rates varied among school districts and high schools and looked at several factors that might help to explain these variations.

Variations in Participation Rates

Data collected by the Department of Children, Families and Learning show that 6,671 students, or about 6 percent of high school juniors and seniors, took courses at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. However, as Figure 2.1 shows:

- **Student participation rates varied considerably among school districts and secondary schools during the 1994-95 school year.**

48 outstate school districts with high schools had no students in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

We calculated student participation rates for school districts using data collected by the Department of Children, Families and Learning and found that participation rates ranged from 0 to 29 percent of high school juniors and seniors.[1] The average participation rate was 4.4 percent and the median was 3.4 percent. Fifteen percent of all districts with high schools (48 of 331) reported that no students from their districts participated in the program during the 1994-95 school year.

Many school districts have more than one high school and we found that participation rates varied significantly among high schools, too.[2] According to data that we collected from secondary school administrators, participation rates for students who attended high schools ranged from 0 to 36 percent during the 1994-95 school year, with an average of 5.2 percent and a median of 4.1 percent. Eight percent of the 327 high schools that responded to our survey indicated that they had no students participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year.

Likewise, participation rates varied considerably among alternative schools and were generally lower than participation rates in traditional high schools.[3] This may not be surprising given that alternative schools typically serve students who have not succeeded in other settings. Participation rates ranged from 0 to 32 percent for alternative schools. The average participation rate was 4.7 percent and the median participation rate was 2.5 percent. Overall, 22 percent of the 74 alternative school directors that responded to our survey reported that no students from their schools took courses at postsecondary schools through the program.

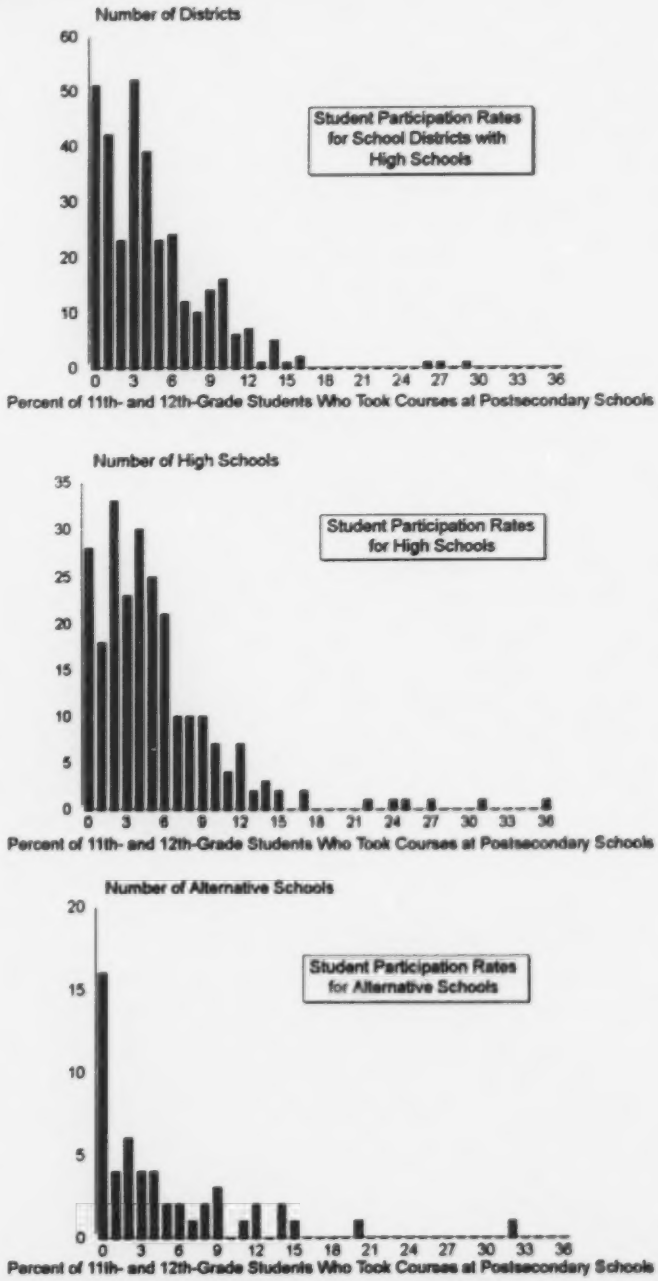
1 Participation rates for school districts include only those students for whom the Department of Children, Families and Learning reimbursed postsecondary schools. We calculated rates based on the number of juniors and seniors who were enrolled in each district as of October 1, 1994. Although data on the number of participants include a small number of adults (1 percent), we were not able to determine the overall number of adults enrolled in districts who were eligible for the program.

2 We calculated participation rates for high schools and alternative schools based on information provided by secondary school administrators in our survey. These rates may include some students who took courses at postsecondary schools through contracts rather than the Department of Children, Families and Learning.

3 Alternative schools are programs established to encourage students who have had problems in traditional high schools and who have not graduated from high school to do so. Alternative schools include area learning centers and other approved nontraditional programs that school districts either contract with or establish themselves. For the purposes of our analysis, we have classified charter schools as alternative schools.

Participation rates ranged from 0 to 36 percent in high schools; the median was 4.1 percent.

Figure 2.1: Student Participation Rates in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95


Number of Districts
Student Participation Rates for School Districts with High Schools
Percent of 11th- and 12th-Grade Students Who Took Courses at Postsecondary Schools
Number of High Schools
Student Participation Rates for High Schools
Percent of 11th- and 12th-Grade Students Who Took Courses at Postsecondary Schools
Number of Alternative Schools
Student Participation Rates for Alternative Schools
Percent of 11th- and 12th-Grade Students Who Took Courses at Postsecondary Schools

Note: Because student participation rates were rounded to the nearest whole number, districts and schools with participation rates less than 0.5 percent appear as 0 percent.

Sources: Office of the Legislative Auditor Secondary School Survey (n = 401), 1995, and Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1995.

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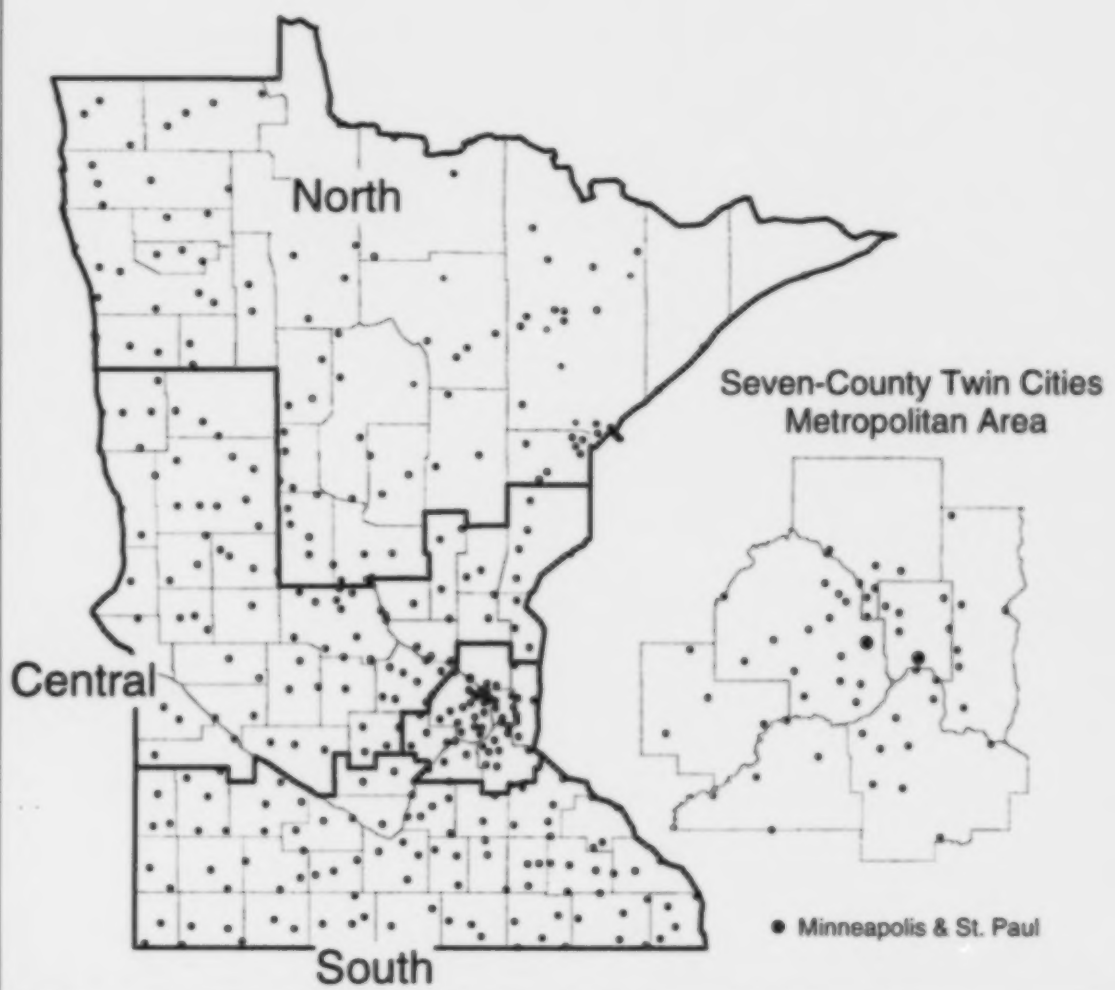
To look at program participation by geographic area of the state, we grouped school districts with high schools into five categories, as shown in Figure 2.2. Twenty-eight percent of the districts were in the northern part of the state, as defined by Educational Cooperative Service Units (ECSUs) 1, 2, 3, and 5.[4] Thirty-six percent were in the central part of the state, encompassing ECSUs 4, 6, and 7 and running diagonally from the state's western border to the Twin Cities' suburban boundaries. Twenty-two percent of the districts were in southern Minnesota, encompassing ECSUs 8, 9, and 10. The remaining 15 percent of districts were in the Twin Cities area (ECSU 11), which we subdivided into its suburban and urban parts. We found that:

Figure 2.2: School Districts with High Schools by Geographic Region



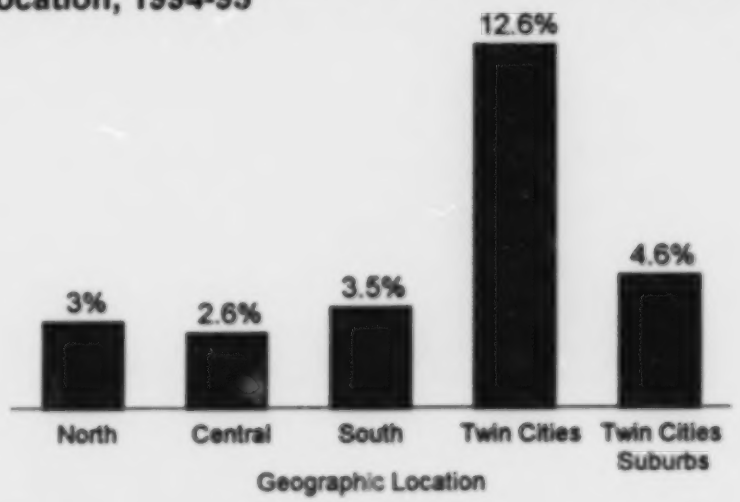
4 Educational Cooperative Service Units (ECSUs) are regional organizations that provide educational planning on a regional basis as well as specific assistance to school districts. Their boundaries generally coincide with the state's economic development planning regions.

- **During the 1994-95 school year, student participation rates were highest for school districts in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area and lowest for districts in central Minnesota.**

As Figure 2.3 shows, the median participation rate for the two school districts in the Twin Cities was 12.8 percent and it was 4.6 percent for suburban school districts in the seven-county metropolitan area.[5] Median participation rates for school districts in the northern and southern parts of the state were 3.0 and 3.5 percent, respectively. The median participation rate for school districts in central Minnesota was 2.6 percent.

Participation was highest in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Figure 2.3: Median Student Participation Rates for School Districts with High Schools by Geographic Location, 1994-95



Source: Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1995.

Explaining Variations Among School Districts

To help explain these variations, we identified several factors that might affect student participation, performing separate statistical analyses for school districts and high schools located in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area and those outstate.[6] First, we examined participation rates among school districts by looking at the eight factors listed in Figure 2.4.

One possible factor affecting student participation might be that districts have unequal amounts of financial resources to spend on their secondary programs. This might make it difficult for some districts to offer a broad array of challenging and

5 The seven counties include Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington.

6 We did not examine participation rates separately for alternative schools because these schools vary considerably among themselves and from high schools. Our district-level analyses include these schools whenever they could be assigned to a specific school district.

Figure 2.4: Factors that Might Help Explain District Variations in Student Participation Rates in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95

Factor	Description	Data Source
Operating expenditures per pupil unit	All expenditures for elementary and secondary education during the 1993-94 school year except capital and debt service expenditures.	Department of Children, Families and Learning
Referendum levy dollars per pupil unit	Dollars levied by districts, as approved by district voters, based on levy payments for 1993-94, excluding levies for capital projects.	Department of Children, Families and Learning
Operating fund balance per pupil unit	Amount of money districts had on hand at the end of the 1993-94 school year.	Department of Children, Families and Learning
Student enrollment	Number of 11th- and 12th-grade public school students as of October 1, 1994.	Department of Children, Families and Learning
Projected enrollment	Percentage difference between enrollment in all grades in 1994-95 and projected enrollment for 1998-99.	Department of Children, Families and Learning
Teachers' training and experience index	Index of teachers' educational achievement and years of service in 1995, used as the basis for special aid payment.	Department of Children, Families and Learning
Median household income	1989 median family income for households in school districts.	United States Census, 1990.
Distance	School districts categorized by the number of miles they are from the nearest city where a postsecondary school is located.	Office of the Legislative Auditor

varied courses to their students, which in turn might make participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program an attractive alternative to their students. In our analysis, we examined three factors that measured districts' financial condition during the 1993-94 school year (the most recent data available): total operating expenditures per pupil unit, referendum levy dollars per pupil unit, and operating fund balance per pupil unit.

In addition, the amount of revenue that districts receive from the school aid formula varies somewhat due to adjustments designed to equalize educational programs. For example, some districts that have highly trained, experienced staff who earn above-average salaries receive additional state aid through the teacher training and experience index.[7]

7 The training and experience index was in effect during the 1994-95 school year, but is being gradually phased out by the Legislature.

Two other factors that might explain variations are the size of districts' 11th- and 12th-grade enrollment (the bulk of the eligible population for the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program) and their projected future enrollment. In a previous study, we found that enrollment size was strongly related to the strength of districts' curricula.[8] Larger districts could offer more courses because they had more students to fill specialized classes and could more easily afford curriculum enhancements due to economies of scale. Districts with the weakest curricula tended to have declining enrollments. Thus, students from these school districts might be attracted to the broader array of courses that postsecondary schools offer.

Another possible factor that may affect student participation is the income level of school districts' residents. As discussed in Chapter 1, the program offers some financial incentives for students to participate which might appeal to students from lower-income families looking for ways to help ease the financial burden of college. On the other hand, higher-income families are more likely to have children in college, so the ability to get a head start on earning college credits might be appealing to them.

Distance from a postsecondary school was the only significant factor explaining student participation rates outstate.

Finally, distance to a postsecondary school might also be related to student participation. When postsecondary schools are located in the same cities as school districts or when they are within easy commuting distance, participation could increase. We grouped school districts into five categories, based on the number of miles that they were from the nearest city with a postsecondary school. Of the 331 school districts that operated high schools during the 1994-95 school year, 14 percent were located in the same city as a postsecondary school, 15 percent were within 10 miles of a city with a postsecondary school, 38 percent were within 10.1 to 20 miles, 30 percent were within 20.1 to 40 miles, and 3 percent were 40.1 or more miles from a city with a postsecondary school.

We examined the relationship between district-level participation rates and each of the above variables during the 1994-94 school year. Since many of the factors are interrelated, we also used statistical techniques to separately determine the strength of each relationship.

Our analysis indicated that the single most important factor that explained student participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year for outstate districts was distance. In general, we found that:

- **The closer an outstate school district was to a city with a postsecondary school, the higher the student participation rate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year.**

Table 2.1 shows the mean and median participation rates for outstate school districts that were located various distances from the nearest city with a postsecondary school. The median participation rate was the highest (5.1 percent) for districts located in the same city as a postsecondary school. Districts within 10 miles of a city with a postsecondary school had a lower median participation rate

8 Office of the Legislative Auditor, *High School Education* (St. Paul, December 1988).

Table 2.1: Student Participation Rates for Outstate School Districts by Distance from the Nearest City With a Postsecondary School, 1994-95

	Student Participation Rates			
Distance	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum
In the same city	6.5%	5.1%	0	26.7%
Within 10 miles	4.6	3.6	0	11.2
10.1 - 20 miles	4.5	3.4	0	29.1
20.1 - 40 miles	3.0	1.5	0	24.7
40.1 or more miles	1.7	1.3	0	4.1

Sources: Office of the Legislative Auditor, 1995, and Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1995.

(3.6 percent), while districts between 10.1 and 20 miles had a slightly lower median participation rate (3.4 percent). Participation rates dropped sharply for districts farther away from cities with postsecondary schools. School districts located 20.1 to 40 miles away had a median participation rate of 1.5 percent and those 40.1 or more miles from a city with a postsecondary school had a median participation rate of 1.3 percent.

However, we found that neither distance nor any of the other seven variables listed in Figure 2.4 helped explain student participation rates for school districts in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. Distance was not important, probably because most districts in the Twin Cities metropolitan area were within easy commuting distance to any number of postsecondary schools, as shown earlier in Figure 1.4.

Explaining Variations Among High Schools

The previous analysis focused on variations in program participation rates at the school district level. Here we examine variations at the high school level by looking at several factors that generally describe Minnesota high schools and their curricula, as shown in Figure 2.5.

For example, one possible factor that might explain variation among high schools is the number of advanced or accelerated secondary courses that are available to students. As indicated earlier, the statutory purposes of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program are to provide students with a broader array of challenging and varied courses than high schools might be able to offer. We asked high school administrators whether their schools taught (1) enriched or accelerated math courses, including calculus, (2) three or more years of college preparatory courses, (3) enriched or accelerated biology, chemistry, and physics, (4) three or more years of enriched or accelerated social studies, (5) advanced technical courses that provide specific job training in at least one specialty area, and (6) three or more years of one foreign language. We measured the breadth of each high school's sec-

Figure 2.5: Factors that Might Help Explain High School Variations in Student Participation Rates in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95

Factor	Description	Data Source
Notification methods	Number of different methods high schools used to inform students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year.	Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools
Secondary courses	Number of different advanced or enriched sequences of secondary courses taught in high schools during the 1994-95 school year.	Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools
Postsecondary courses	Total number of courses taught in high schools for which students could earn postsecondary credit during the 1994-95 school year.	Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools
Administrators' satisfaction	Measure of high school administrators' level of satisfaction with how the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program has performed.	Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools
Student enrollment	Number of 11th- and 12th-grade students enrolled in the high school during the 1994-95 school year.	Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools
Distance	High schools categorized by the number of miles they are from the nearest city where a postsecondary school is located.	Office of the Legislative Auditor

ondary curriculum by counting the total number of such courses offered, according to our survey of high school administrators.

We also looked at the number of courses that high schools taught in which students could earn postsecondary credit as another possible factor to explain participation. Students who attend high schools that teach postsecondary courses on site may find these options more convenient than those offered at postsecondary schools. We counted the total number of Advanced Placement courses taught, the number of postsecondary courses taught under contracts with postsecondary schools, and the number of courses taught in secondary schools through other options, such as the International Baccalaureate program and courses provided under articulation agreements.[9]

We examined the number of different ways that secondary schools notified students and their parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program as a possible factor affecting student participation. We tabulated the number of different methods that secondary administrators said that they used, as shown earlier in Table 1.7. Also, because administrators' overall level of satisfaction with the Post-

9 Under an articulation agreement, a high school agrees to teach a specific course in the same manner as a certain technical college does. Students who successfully complete the secondary course automatically receive postsecondary credit for it after graduation if they attend that technical college.

secondary Enrollment Options program might affect student participation, we also included this variable in our analysis. Some people have suggested that some secondary school administrators and staff have tried to discourage students from participating in the program.

We examined the relationship between high school-level student participation rates and each of the factors listed earlier in Figure 2.5. Since some of the factors are interrelated, we also used statistical techniques to separately determine the strength of each. Again, our analysis indicated that distance was the most important factor that explained student participation rates for high schools outside the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. In general, we found that:

- **The closer a high school outside the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area was to a city with a postsecondary school, the higher the student participation rate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year.**

Again, we found that no one variable helped explain participation rates for high schools in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. Participation rates for outstate high schools varied in the same manner as they did for school districts. As Table 2.2 shows, high schools located in the same cities as postsecondary schools had the highest median participation rate (7.4 percent). High schools within 10 miles of a city with a postsecondary school had a median participation rate of 3.7 percent and those within 10.1 to 20 miles had a median rate of 3.5 percent. High schools located farther from cities with postsecondary schools had even lower participation rates. Those between 20.1 and 40 miles had a median participation rate of 2.3 percent, while those 40.1 or more miles from a city with a postsecondary school had the lowest median participation rate (2.0 percent).

Table 2.2: Student Participation Rates for Outstate High Schools by Distance from the Nearest City With a Postsecondary School, 1994-95

	Student Participation Rates			
Distance	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum
In the same city	8.8%	7.4%	1.6%	35.5%
Within 10 miles	5.2	3.7	0.0	13.2
10.1 - 20 miles	4.8	3.5	0.0	31.3
20.1 - 40 miles	3.4	2.3	0.0	25.3
40.1 or more miles	1.9	2.0	0.0	5.3

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor, Survey of Secondary Schools (n = 401), 1995.

Furthermore, we found that:

- **Variables measuring the availability of postsecondary courses in high schools, the depth of the high school curriculum, the number of notification methods that high schools used to inform students and**

parents about the program, and administrators' overall satisfaction with the program had little or no relationship to student participation rates during the 1994-95 school year.

Our data show that student participation rates in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program were not strongly related to the availability of postsecondary courses in the high school or advanced or accelerated secondary courses. On the average, 65 percent of the high schools that we surveyed offered at least one course on site where students could potentially earn postsecondary credit. As shown earlier in Table 1.4, 45 percent of high schools offered Advanced Placement courses, 38 percent had agreements with postsecondary schools to teach postsecondary courses in the high school, and 11 percent offered other options for gaining postsecondary credit.

Other factors, like secondary schools' curriculum and attitude toward the program, did not affect students' participation rate.

In addition, the availability of enriched or accelerated secondary courses on site bore little relationship to students' interest in taking courses at postsecondary schools. We found that 83 percent of the high schools surveyed taught three or more years of a single foreign language, 78 percent had enriched or accelerated math, including calculus, 74 percent taught three or more years of college preparatory courses, 57 percent had enriched or accelerated biology, chemistry, and physics, and 47 percent taught advanced technical courses that provided specific job training in at least one specialty area.

Although the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, along with the other "choice" programs adopted by the Legislature over the years, was intended to improve secondary schools by placing them in a more competitive, market-controlled environment, our analysis suggests that curriculum enhancements will not necessarily help secondary schools compete with postsecondary schools. As we discuss later, students have primarily participated in the program for reasons that are essentially unrelated to secondary school curricula and, thus, are beyond the control of secondary school administrators.

Districts With No Student Participation

As indicated earlier, data from the Department of Children, Families and Learning show that 15 percent of the 331 school districts with high schools had no students taking courses at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. Eleventh- and 12th-grade enrollment in these districts made up nearly 4.5 percent of all 11th- and 12th-graders statewide.

As shown in Table 2.3, most of the 48 districts that reported no program participation were in central (23) or northern (20) Minnesota, with a few (5) in the southern part of the state. All of the school districts in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area had students participating in the program. Looked at another way, 22 percent of the school districts in northern Minnesota, 19 percent of those in central Minnesota, and 7 percent of the districts in southern Minnesota had no students who took courses at postsecondary schools through the Department of Children, Families and Learning during the 1994-95 school year.

Table 2.3: Student Participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program by Location of School Districts, 1994-95

	Districts With No Participants		Districts With at Least One Participant		Total Districts With High Schools	
Geographic Area	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
North	20	42%	72	25%	92	28%
Central	23	48	96	34	119	36
South	5	10	67	24	72	22
Twin Cities	0	0	2	1	2	1
Suburban Twin Cities	0	0	46	16	46	14
Total	48	100%	283	100%	331	100%

Note: Some figures do not total 100 due to rounding.

Source: Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1995.

Thus, our data indicate that:

- **Some students have had unequal access to courses at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

As Table 2.4 shows, almost one-half of the districts that reported no student participants were located in cities that were more than 20 miles from a city with a postsecondary school. Only 8 percent of the districts within 10 miles of a city with a postsecondary school did not participate in the program and 14 percent of districts within 10.1 to 20 miles had no participants.[10] In contrast, 24 percent of districts 20.1 to 40 miles away had no participants while 20 percent of districts more than 40 miles from a city with a postsecondary school had no participants.

These data support our previous analyses that show that distance to a city with a postsecondary school was the most important factor in explaining variations in participation rates for school districts and high schools in outstate Minnesota. In addition, we found that:

- **School districts that had no students participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program through the Department of Children, Families and Learning generally provided fewer on-site courses in which students could earn postsecondary credit.**

For the most part, these districts tended to have lower enrollments of 11th- and 12th-grade students, lower district household incomes, and slightly higher operating expenditures per student. As shown in Table 2.5, high schools in these districts were much less likely to teach courses for which students could earn postsecondary credit, such as Advanced Placement or college-in-the-classroom.

10 The two school districts located in the same cities as postsecondary schools had contracts with local postsecondary schools to enroll students in campus courses. Because the Department of Children, Families and Learning did not reimburse postsecondary schools for the courses that these students took, the department did not include them in its data.

Table 2.4: Student Participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program by School Districts' Distance From the Nearest City With a Postsecondary School, 1994-95

	Districts With No Participants		Districts With at Least One Participant		Total Districts With High Schools	
Distance	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Located in same city	2	4%	45	16%	47	14%
Within 10 miles	2	4	47	17	49	15
10.1 - 20 miles	18	38	108	38	126	38
20.1 - 40 miles	24	50	75	27	99	30
40.1 or more miles	2	4	8	3	10	3
Total	48	100%	283	100%	331	100%

Note: Some figures do not total 100 due to rounding.

Sources: Office of the Legislative Auditor, 1995, and Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1995.

Table 2.5: Selected Characteristics of School Districts by Student Participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95

	Districts With No Participants (N = 48)		Districts With at Least One Participant (N = 283)		All Districts With High Schools (N = 331)	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
11th and 12th grade enrollment	103	78	374	181	334	167
Operating expenditures per pupil unit	$4,677	$4,534	$4,506	$4,404	$4,531	$4,422
Household income	$20,726	$20,459	$27,462	$25,372	$26,432	$24,237
Number of advanced secondary course sequences taught	2.7	3	3.1	3	3.1	3
Number of Advanced Placement courses taught in secondary schools	0.3	0	1.2	0	1.1	0
Number of postsecondary courses taught through contracts in secondary schools	0.6	0	1.4	0	1.3	0
Total number of postsecondary courses available in secondary schools	0.9	0	2.9	1.5	2.7	1

Sources: Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1995, U.S. Census, 1990, and Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools (n = 401), 1995.

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

This section describes the students who participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program through the Department of Children, Families and Learning during the 1994-95 school year and compares them with the eligible population as a whole. In addition, we discuss the reasons why these students chose to participate in the program.

Student Characteristics

We compared the characteristics of students who took courses at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year with all eligible 11th- and 12th-grade students. We learned that:

- **The majority of program participants during the 1994-95 school year were females and high school seniors.**

Sixty-four percent of participants were women; seventy-three percent were 12th-graders.

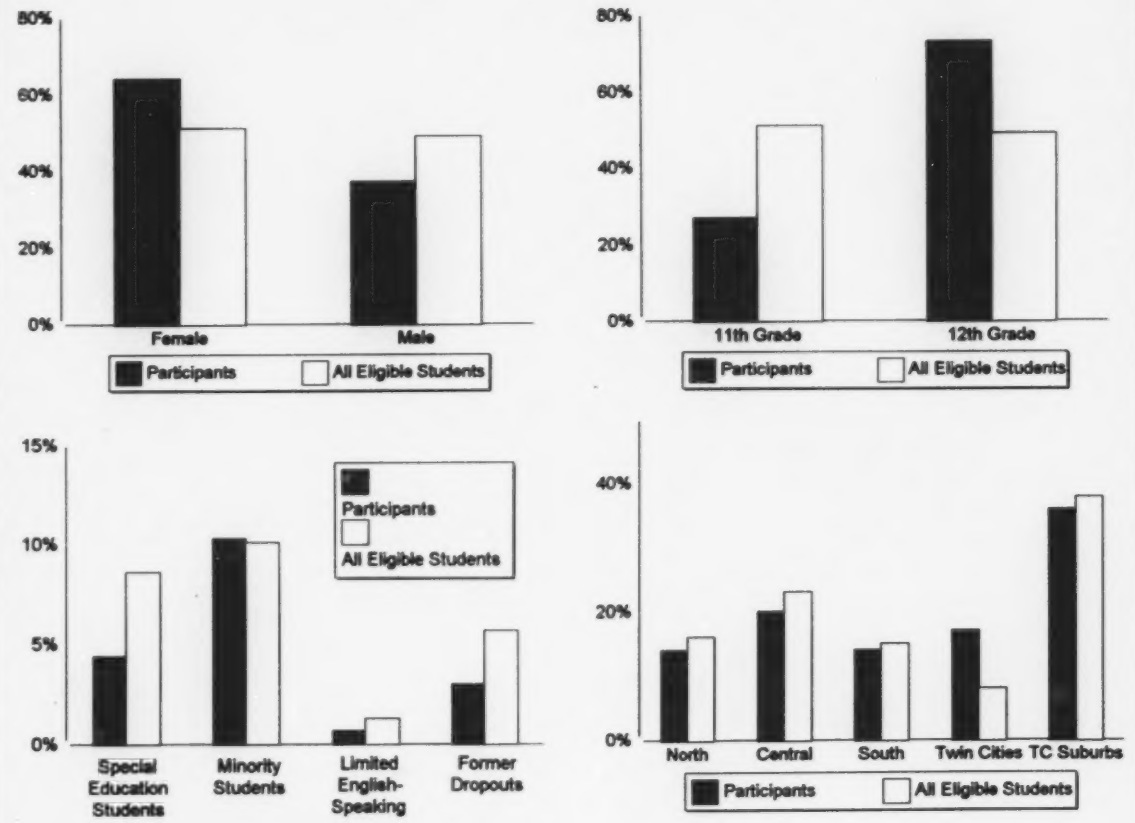
As Figure 2.6 shows, 64 percent of program participants during the 1994-95 school year were females. In comparison, about one-half of all 11th- and 12th-graders in the state were female. The Postsecondary Enrollment Options program was also predominately composed of 12th-grade students. They accounted for 73 percent of participants, but 49 percent of the eligible population. While the gender disparity is somewhat difficult to explain, the reasons for the higher participation rate by 12th-graders is understandable. As we noted earlier in Chapter 1, postsecondary schools had higher admission requirements for 11th-grade students compared with 12th-grade students. Also, 12th-grade students may have been more interested in postsecondary education since high school graduation was more imminent.

Although some adults are eligible to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, as discussed in Chapter 1, very few did. According to data collected by the Department of Children, Families and Learning, 99 percent of program participants during the 1994-95 school year were less than 21 years of age and only 1 percent were 21 years old or more. In addition, 3 percent of program participants were former high school dropouts compared with 5.7 percent of the eligible population.

Data from the Department of Children, Families and Learning indicate that minority students comprised 10 percent of both program participants and eligible students during 1994-95. On the other hand, special education students (those with an Individual Education Plan) made up 8.6 percent of eligible students and 4.4 percent of program participants. Likewise, students with Limited English Proficiency Plans (those for whom English is not the primary language spoken at home) accounted for 1.3 percent of eligible students and 0.7 percent of student participants.

In addition, we found that students from the Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in disproportionately high numbers. Although students from these two districts accounted for

Figure 2.6: Characteristics of Program Participants, 1994-95



Note: Some figures may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1995.

only 8 percent of eligible students during the 1994-95 school year, they made up 17 percent of program participants, while students from the rest of Minnesota were slightly underrepresented. Looked at another way, 5 percent of eligible students from school districts in northern, southern, and central Minnesota each participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, compared with 7 percent of eligible students from Twin Cities suburban districts and 13 percent of eligible students from the Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts.

To participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, students must be enrolled in a Minnesota public school district. Some administrators that we talked with expressed concern that students were enrolling in their schools from home schools, private schools, or from other states, simply to take advantage of the program. We asked a random sample of 300 parents whose children had participated in the program during 1994-95 what type of school their children attended in their sophomore year (the year preceding program eligibility). We found that:

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- **Most students who took courses at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year attended Minnesota public schools before participating in the program.**

According to survey data, 95 percent of parents said that their children attended a Minnesota public school during their sophomore year while 5 percent did not. Of these, slightly more than 1 percent each either came from out-of-state schools, home schools, private high schools, or some other settings. Given that a certain amount of family mobility and school transfers are to be expected, even without a Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, the 5 percent of program participants who were new to Minnesota public schools seems small.

Family Income of Participants

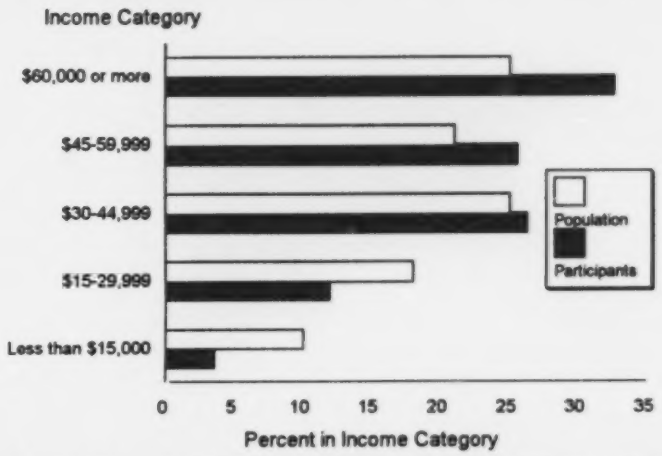
We asked parents of participants which of the following income groups described their total family income for 1994: less than $15,000, $15,000 to $29,999, $30,000 to $44,999, $45,000 to $59,999 and $60,000 or more. We then compared their responses with the income levels of Minnesota families who had at least one child 16 to 18 years of age, as reported in the 1990 U.S. Census. We found that:

- **The majority of students who participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year came from families with total incomes of at least $45,000.**

As shown by Figure 2.7, 59 percent of program participants had total family incomes of at least $45,000, well above the median income for all Minnesota families of $36,916.[11] Students whose total family incomes were less than $15,000 made up only 4 percent of program participants during the 1994-95 school year although they made up 10 percent of the population. Students with total family incomes of $15,000 to $29,999 made up 12 percent of participants, but 18 percent of the population. Together, 16 percent of program participants reported family incomes below $30,000, whereas 28 percent of Minnesota families reported such income levels. In contrast, students whose total family incomes were $45,000 to $59,999 made up 26 percent of participants, while 21 percent of Minnesota families reported incomes at this level. Finally, students with total family incomes of at least $60,000 accounted for 33 percent of program participants, but 25 percent of all families. Together, students from these last two groupings comprised 59 percent of program participants, but 46 percent of Minnesota families with incomes that large.

11 Based on the 1990 U.S. Census.

Figure 2.7: Program Participants' Family Incomes Compared with Similar Minnesota Families, 1994-95

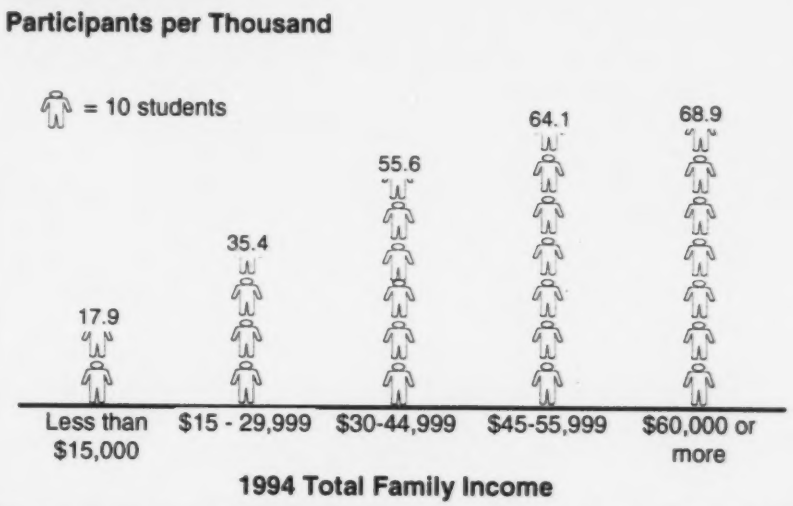


Sources: Office of the Legislative Auditor Parent Survey (n = 300), 1995, and U.S. Census, 1990. Parent survey is subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

Figure 2.8 depicts program participation in a slightly different fashion, that is, the number of participants per 1,000 Minnesota families with at least one child 16 to 18 years of age at each income level. As shown, participation increased sharply with income, nearly doubling as total income increased from less than $15,000 to $15,000 to $29,999, and going up by more than one-half as income increased to $30,000 to $44,999. Overall, the participation rate was nearly 4 times higher

The higher the student's family income, the greater the likelihood of participating.

Figure 2.8: Student Participation Rates by Level of Family Income



Sources: Office of the Legislative Auditor Parent Survey (n = 300), 1995, and U.S. Census, 1990. Parent survey is subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

among families earning $60,000 a year than it was among families earning less than $15,000.

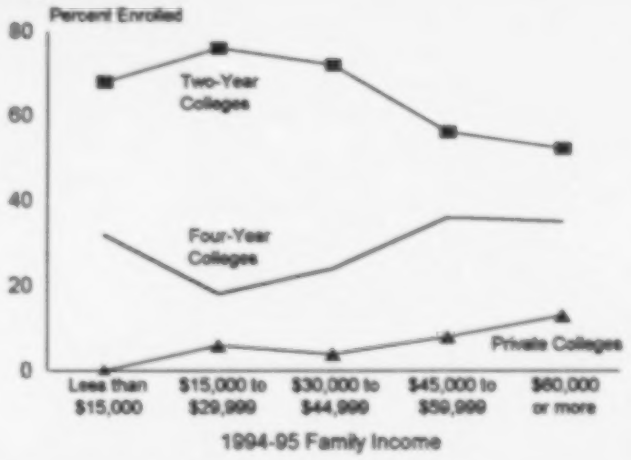
We also found that:

- **Students from families with incomes of at least $45,000 were more likely to take courses at four-year schools, especially private colleges, than were students from families with incomes less than $30,000.**

As Figure 2.9 shows, 75 percent of students from families with incomes less than $30,000 took courses at public two-year schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year compared with 55 percent of students from families with incomes of $45,000 or more. Similarly, only 5 percent of students with family incomes below $30,000 attended private colleges, while 11 percent of students with family incomes of at least $45,000 did.

Students with higher family income gravitated toward four-year schools, especially private colleges.

Figure 2.9: Program Participants Enrolled in Two- or Four-Year Postsecondary Schools by Family Income, 1994-95



Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Parent Survey (n = 300), 1995. Parent survey is subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

Our data also show that students who came from families where at least one member had earned at least a four-year degree were more likely to take courses at four-year schools than were students from families that had attained lower levels of education. For example, 55 percent of the students from families where someone had earned at least a bachelor's degree took courses at four-year schools; 13 percent of them attended private colleges. In contrast, only 17 percent of students who came from families where the highest level of education attained was a two-year degree attended four-year schools.

School Administrators' Assessment of Participants

We asked school administrators to provide various information that described the students from their schools who participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. According to survey data:

- **With the exception of technical college administrators, the majority of school administrators said that most program participants were mature and self-motivated and that few had social or behavioral problems.**

We asked school administrators whether participants from their schools during the 1994-95 school year displayed various characteristics, as shown in Table 2.6. According to the majority of secondary administrators, at least three-fourths of participants were in the top third of their class, very mature, and self-motivated, and one-fourth or less were bored with school, loners, or had social or behavior problems. However, alternative school administrators had a slightly different view, reporting that participating students from their schools were less likely to be in the top third of their class and more likely to have social, behavioral, or family problems than students from regular high schools.

With the exception of technical college administrators, postsecondary administrators reported few concerns about the type of secondary students that attended their schools, as shown in Table 2.7. The majority of postsecondary administrators said

Table 2.6: Secondary Administrators' Assessment of Program Participants' Characteristics, 1994-95

	Percent Who Said:				
Characteristic	Few or None	About One-Fourth	About One-Half	About Three-Fourths	All or Nearly All
Top third in class ranking	21%	14%	16%	16%	32%
Bottom third in class ranking	68	17	6	2	6
Very mature	14	13	26	23	22
Loners	45	22	16	6	10
Self-motivated	11	10	26	22	31
Bored	48	25	15	6	5
Gifted/talented	55	23	9	6	7
Social/behavior problems	67	18	8	3	4
Family problems	44	21	15	8	11

Note: The question was, "To the best of your knowledge, about how many of the students from your school who used the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year displayed the following characteristics?"

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools (n = 401), 1995.

Table 2.7: Postsecondary Administrators' Assessment of Program Participants' Characteristics, 1994-95

Characteristic	Percent Who Said: Few or None	About One-Fourth	About One-Half	About Three-Fourths	All or Nearly All
Similar in maturity to regularly admitted postsecondary classmates	6%	11%	26%	26%	29%
Active in campus life	53	26	7	9	5
Self-motivated	5	7	29	29	31
Appropriately placed in postsecondary classes	0	1	16	24	59
Needed special services to be successful	65	25	9	0	2
Had social/behavior problems	83	14	2	2	0
Lacked necessary academic preparation for postsecondary education	59	30	10	1	0
Were incorrectly selected for admission	89	9	2	0	0

Note: The question was, "To the best of your knowledge, about how many of the secondary students on your campus who used the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year displayed the following characteristics?"

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Postsecondary Campuses (n = 78), 1995.

that at least three-fourths of the secondary students attending their schools were mature, self-motivated, and appropriately placed, and that one-fourth or less were incorrectly selected for admission, needed special services, or had social or behavioral problems. However, technical school administrators had a different view of secondary students. Significantly fewer public technical school administrators (about 37 percent) reported that the secondary students taking courses at their schools were mature, self-motivated, or appropriately placed compared with 85 percent of all other postsecondary administrators.

Data that we collected from postsecondary administrators show that regularly admitted technical college students generally were older than postsecondary students who attended other types of schools. Consequently, program participants in technical colleges tended to be much younger than regular technical college students. During the 1994-95 school year, 46 percent of regular technical college students were at least 25 years of age, while 58 percent of program participants in technical colleges were 18 years of age or less.

Reasons for Participating

We examined why students participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. We asked secondary administrators to rate the importance of various reasons why students *should participate* in the program. We also asked school administrators, program participants, and parents to rate the importance of various reasons why students *actually participated* in the program during the 1994-95 school year. We found that:

- **Although the majority of secondary school administrators said that students should primarily use the program to supplement the secondary school curriculum, students most often reported that they actually used the program to get a head start on earning college credits and to save money.**

The main reasons for students' participation were to get a head start on college credits and save money.

As shown in Table 2.8, 94 percent of secondary administrators surveyed indicated that taking courses not available in secondary school was a "good" or "very good" reason for students to use the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, while 83 percent indicated that taking more challenging courses was a "good" or "very good" reason. These two reasons reflect the statutory purposes of the program: "to promote rigorous academic pursuits and to provide a variety of options to high school students."[12] Fewer administrators said that using the program to get a head start on college credits (69 percent) or to save on postsecondary costs (67 percent) was a "good" or "very good" reason for students to participate.

We then asked school administrators, students, and parents to rate the importance of various reasons why students actually took courses at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year. As shown in Table 2.9, 90 percent of the secondary administrators surveyed said that saving money on postsecondary costs was an "important" or "very important" reason why their students used the program and 87 percent said that getting a head start on college credits was "important" or "very important." Of the postsecondary administrators, 95 percent said that saving money was "important" or "very important" to students and 92 percent said that getting a head start on postsecondary credits was "important" or "very important." Sixty-one percent of secondary school administrators and 74 percent of postsecondary administrators indicated that being in a less restrictive environment was "important" or "very important" to students. The majority of school administrators also acknowledged the importance of proximity to a postsecondary school. Seventy-one percent of the secondary school administrators and 81 percent of postsecondary administrators said that the postsecondary school's convenient location was an "important" or "very important" reason to students.

Students generally agreed with school administrators' assessments of their primary motivations. Ninety-four percent of the students surveyed indicated that getting a head start on college credits was "important" or "very important" to them and 82

12 Minn. Stat. §123.3514, Subd. 2.

Table 2.8: Secondary School Administrators' Assessment of Reasons Why Students Should Use the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program

	Percent Who Said Reason was "Good" or "Very Good":					
	High Schools		Alternative Schools		Total	
Reason	Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good
Courses are not available in their secondary school.	40%	54%	35%	61%	39%	55%
Courses are more challenging than those in their secondary school.	39	43	46	44	40	43
Courses are less challenging than those in their secondary school.	1	1	3	1	2	1
To be with friends.	1	0	4	0	2	0
To get a head start on college credits.	43	23	36	41	42	27
To help decide whether or where to go to college after high school.	32	9	52	25	36	12
To help get into a certain college after graduation.	29	8	51	13	33	9
To be in a less restrictive learning environment.	29	4	47	10	32	5
To save on postsecondary costs.	39	25	35	41	39	28
To please parents	8	2	12	1	9	2
To be with more mature classmates.	31	2	45	10	34	4
To improve students' social or emotional life.	23	1	42	12	26	3
To avoid taking particular courses or teachers.	4	< 1	6	1	4	1
A postsecondary school is conveniently located.	30	10	44	17	32	12

The question was, "Please indicate the extent to which you think the following reasons are generally good or bad reasons for students to consider using the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program to take courses at postsecondary schools."

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools (n = 401), 1995.

Table 2.9: Administrators', Student Participants', and Parents' Ratings of the Importance of Various Reasons for Program Participation, 1994-95

	Percent Who Said the Reason Was "Important" or "Very Important":							
	Secondary Administrators		Postsecondary Administrators		Students		Parents	
Reason	Important	Very Important	Important	Very Important	Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
To get a head start on college credits	38%	49%	37%	55%	21%	73%	21%	67%
To save on postsecondary costs	29	61	36	59	38	44	21	57
Courses were more challenging	23	7	41	24	43	34	36	51
Courses were not available in secondary school	29	11	54	27	35	24	31	45
To be in a less restrictive learning environment	46	15	54	20	37	28	NA[a]	NA[a]
To be with more mature classmates	23	3	40	3	45	14	NA[a]	NA[a]
Courses were less challenging	8	1	0	0	7	2	NA[a]	NA[a]
To be with friends	14	3	16	<1	12	2	NA[a]	NA[a]
To help decide where to go to college	21	5	39	0	33	19	NA[a]	NA[a]
To help get into a certain college	10	2	23	1	26	11	NA[a]	NA[a]
To please parents	33	6	33	8	19	4	NA[a]	NA[a]
To improve one's social/emotional life	20	6	35	0	20	4	NA[a]	NA[a]
To avoid a particular course or teacher	19	6	32	7	14	4	NA[a]	NA[a]
Postsecondary school was conveniently located	51	20	50	31	36	10	NA[a]	NA[a]

Note: The question, with some variation depending on the survey, was, "Students use the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program for a variety of reasons. Please indicate how important you think the following reasons were to students from your school who took courses at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year."

Sources: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools (n = 401), Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), Students (n = 300), and Parents (n = 300), 1995. Student and parent surveys are subject to sampling errors of ± 6 percentage points.

[a]Not asked.

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percent said that saving on postsecondary costs was "important" or "very important."[13] The majority of students also rated the following reasons for participating as "important" or "very important:" being in a less restrictive environment (61 percent), being with more mature classmates (59 percent), and helping them decide where to go to college (52 percent).

Parents agreed on the overall importance of getting a head start on postsecondary credits--88 percent said that it was "somewhat important" or "very important" to their child. In addition, 87 percent of the parents said that it was "somewhat important" or "very important" to their children to take more challenging courses, 78 percent to save on postsecondary costs, and 76 percent to take otherwise unavailable courses.

In addition, our data indicate that:

- **Saving money on college costs was especially important to students with lower family incomes.**

We found that, as total family income decreased, the percentage of students who reported that saving money on postsecondary costs was a "very important" reason why they participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year increased. All of the students that we surveyed whose total family income was less than $15,000 and 79 percent of students with incomes between $15,000 and $29,999 said that saving money was a "very important" reason why they participated in the program. Sixty-eight percent of students with total family incomes of $30,000 to $49,999 and 54 percent with incomes between $45,000 and $59,000 said that saving money was "very important." Finally, 42 percent of students with total family incomes of $60,000 or more reported that saving money on postsecondary costs was "very important" to them.

POSTSECONDARY COURSES

In this section, we present data collected by the Department of Children, Families and Learning on the types of postsecondary courses that program participants enrolled in at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year. We also present data that we collected from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, the University of Minnesota, and various private colleges on how successful secondary students were in their postsecondary courses.

Types of Courses

Data collected by the Department of Children, Families and Learning show that 6,671 students took 36,585 courses at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. As shown in Table 2.10:

13 Almost three-fourths of the students (73 percent) said that getting a head start on college credits was a "very important" reason why they used the program.

Table 2.10: Type of Postsecondary Courses Taken on Campus by Program Participants, 1994-95

	Percent of Courses Taken At:						
Courses	Technical Colleges	Community Colleges	State Universities	University of Minnesota	Private Colleges	Private Vocational Schools	Overall
Social Sciences[a]	2%	29%	32%	31%	29%	0%	27%
Language Arts[b]	2	27	23	24	23	0	23
Trades, Vocations, and Industries	86	< 1	< 1	< 1	0	100	10
Math[c]	1	9	7	10	9	0	8
Science[d]	< 1	7	13	10	11	0	7
Physical Education	0	7	3	2	4	0	5
World Languages	< 1	3	5	9	9	0	4
Business[e]	6	5	1	< 1	1	0	4
Health[f]	2	4	2	< 1	< 1	0	3
Music[g]	< 1	3	2	3	4	0	3
Visual Arts[h]	< 1	3	1	3	3	0	2
Technology[i]	1	2	4	3	1	0	2
Miscellaneous[j]	< 1	1	6	3	6	0	2
Number of Students	1,208	3,090	576	1,417	536	21	6,848
Number of Courses	4,068	20,831	3,015	5,900	2,666	105	36,585

Note: The same students sometimes take classes in more than one type of postsecondary school. Some figures do not total 100 due to rounding.

Source: Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1995.

[a]Includes history, geography, political science, humanities, philosophy, sociology, psychology, justice, human services, education, and ethnic and women's studies.

[b]Includes English, literature, composition, speech, theater, journalism, and study skills.

[c]Includes algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and calculus.

[d]Includes chemistry, physics, biology, astronomy, engineering, geology, and architecture.

[e]Includes office practice, typing, marketing, bookeeping, accounting, and business methods.

[f]Includes nutrition and hospital management.

[g]Includes instrumental and vocal.

[h]Includes photography.

[i]Includes data processing, aviation, communications, media, naval sciences, and computers.

[j]Includes environment, home economics, agriculture, directed studies, child development, and other.

- **Overall, students tended to enroll in core academic courses at postsecondary schools, most frequently social science and language arts courses.**

We found that one-half of the courses taken by students who used the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year were social science (27 percent) and language arts (23 percent) courses. Social science includes history, economics, political science, humanities, philosophy, sociology, psychology, criminal justice, human services, education, and ethnic and women's studies. Language arts include English, literature, composition, speech, theater, journalism, and study skills. Vocational and technology courses comprised 12 percent of all courses, while mathematics, science, and physical education accounted for smaller percentages of the courses taken: 8, 7, and 5 percent, respectively.

Students mainly took courses in core academic areas.

Participants attended community colleges for 57 percent of all courses taken at postsecondary schools through the program during the 1994-95 school year. This was more than three times the number of courses taken at the University of Minnesota (16 percent) and technical colleges (11 percent). Courses at state universities and private colleges accounted for 8 and 7 percent respectively, while courses at private vocational schools comprised less than 1 percent of the total.

The majority of program participants enrolled for the entire school year. According to data collected by the Department of Children, Families and Learning, one-half of the students who took courses at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year took at least one course each quarter or semester. One-third took one or more courses for just one quarter or semester, while almost one-fifth took courses for two quarters.

Students who took courses at community colleges, state universities, or private colleges were more likely to take one or more postsecondary courses in each term than were students who took courses at public technical colleges or the University of Minnesota. Sixty-eight percent of the students enrolled in private colleges, 58 percent in community colleges, and 51 percent in state universities took at least one course each quarter or semester. In contrast, 31 percent of the students enrolled in public technical colleges took courses all year long while 50 percent enrolled in courses for only one quarter. At the University of Minnesota, 46 percent of secondary students took at least one course each quarter while 31 percent enrolled for only one quarter. Nineteen percent of students enrolled in private technical schools took at least one course each quarter or semester, while 48 percent took courses for only one quarter or semester.

According to data collected by the Department of Children, Families and Learning:

- **Thirteen percent of all students who participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year attended postsecondary schools full time, most frequently at private colleges.**

A full-time student was defined as one who carried at least 45 quarter credits or 30 semester credits during the 1994-95 school year. We found that 29 percent of participants who took courses at private schools enrolled full time as did 16 percent of the students who attended community colleges. Twelve percent of participants in state universities, 11 percent of those in private vocational schools, and 10 percent in technical colleges were enrolled full time. At the University of Minnesota, 5 percent of program participants attended postsecondary school full time.

In addition:

- **Another 15 percent of participants did not take any secondary courses, but attended postsecondary schools only part time.**

In these instances, secondary students had most likely completed all or enough of their high school graduation requirements that they did not have to carry a full load of courses at postsecondary schools. According to our survey of secondary schools, 46 percent of administrators said that participants took courses at postsecondary schools to satisfy high school graduation requirements while 47 percent said that their students took postsecondary courses to earn additional credits beyond the minimum required. The remaining 7 percent of administrators said that participants took courses at postsecondary schools for both reasons.

We did not compare the type of secondary courses that were available to students with the postsecondary courses in which they enrolled. Although we have documented the availability of advanced secondary and postsecondary courses that were taught in secondary schools, we have not compared course rigor. Course rigor can vary considerably among different schools as well as within a single school depending on course content and magnitude, instructor qualifications and ability, and student ability. However, as noted earlier, the availability of advanced secondary courses and postsecondary courses in high schools was not a critical factor in helping to explain student participation rates.

We asked students to compare their secondary and postsecondary courses. The majority of students that we surveyed said that their postsecondary courses proceeded at a faster pace (87 percent), were more challenging (75 percent), and covered subject matter in more depth (72 percent) than secondary courses. Furthermore, 68 percent said that they spent more time on homework for their postsecondary courses.

Course Outcomes

Table 2.11 shows that:

- **Most of the students who used the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program to take courses at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year completed and received secondary credit for the courses taken.**

Table 2.11: Secondary School Administrators' Assessment of Student Completion Rates for Postsecondary Courses, 1994-95

Percent of Participants Who:	High Schools	Alternative Schools	Total
Attended school part time	66%	66%	66%
Attended a postsecondary school full time	31	20	30
Attended a postecondary school full time throughout both their junior and senior years	7	3	7
Completed and received high school credit for all postsecondary courses taken	79	72	78
Completed but did not receive high school credit for all postsecondary courses taken	3	9	4
Enrolled in but did not complete one or more postsecondary courses or receive high school credit for them	11	22	12
Fell behind in the number of credits necessary to graduate from high school because they failed or did not complete a postsecondary course	5	12	6
Failed to graduate from high school on schedule because they failed or did not complete a postsecondary course	3	5	3

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Secondary Schools (n = 401), 1995.

Some students did not successfully complete their postsecondary courses.

According to our survey of secondary school administrators, 78 percent of students who took at least one course at postsecondary schools through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year completed and received credit for all of them. Another 4 percent completed all of the postsecondary courses that they took, but did not receive secondary credit for all of them.

But not all students were successful. According to the same secondary administrators, 12 percent of students enrolled in but did not complete one or more postsecondary courses, 6 percent fell behind in the number of credits needed to graduate because they failed or did not complete a postsecondary course, and 3 percent failed to graduate from high school on schedule because they did not complete or failed a postsecondary course.

Our data suggest that:

- **Students from alternative schools had more problems successfully completing courses taken at postsecondary schools than did other high school students.**

As Table 2.11 shows, 72 percent of alternative school participants completed and received secondary credit for all postsecondary courses taken and another 9 percent completed their postsecondary courses but did not receive high school credit for all of them, according to alternative school administrators. However, 22 percent of alternative school participants enrolled in but did not complete one or more postsecondary courses or receive secondary credit for them, 12 percent fell behind in the number of credits needed to graduate, and 5 percent failed to graduate on schedule.

We compared the actual grades and overall grade point averages that secondary students earned in their postsecondary courses under the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program with those of other regularly-admitted postsecondary students. This analysis showed that:

- **Program participants generally received higher grades than regularly admitted postsecondary students during the 1994-95 school year, except at public technical colleges, where they did somewhat worse.**

The data in Table 2.12 show the percentage of grades that program participants and regular postsecondary students received during the 1994-95 school year. At the University of Minnesota, 4 percent of the grades received by program participants and new freshmen alike received were "F" or "No credit." At state universities, 5 percent of the grades received by secondary students compared with 6 percent of those received by new freshmen were "F" or "No credit," while 6 per-

Table 2.12: Grades Received in Postsecondary Courses by Program Participants Compared With Regularly Admitted Postsecondary Students, 1994-95

	Technical Colleges		Community Colleges		State Universities		University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	
Grade	Program Participants	New Degree Seekers	Program Participants	New Degree Seekers	Program Participants	New Freshmen	Program Participants	New Freshmen
A	21%	21%	31%	21%	33%	24%	40%	30%
B	30	20	30	23	33	28	36	30
C	20	13	19	20	19	24	12	22
D	5	3	5	8	5	8	2	5
Pass or Satisfactory	7	23	2	4	2	5	3	3
F or No Credit	9	6	6	13	5	6	4	4
Withdraw	8	10	7	12	3	4	2	4
Incomplete	1	1	< 1	< 1	1	1	2	1

Note: Some figures do not total 100 due to rounding.

Sources: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system office, 1995, and University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, 1995.

cent of secondary students' grades compared with 13 percent of new degree seekers' grades at community colleges were "F" or "No credit." However, 9 percent of the grades received by secondary students in technical colleges were "F" or "No credit" compared with 6 percent of new degree seekers' grades.

We also compared the overall grade point averages that students earned in 1994-95, as shown in Table 2.13. Secondary students attending community colleges earned a 2.78 grade point average (on a 4-point scale, with 4 being the highest or an "A") in their college courses compared with a 2.37 grade point average for newly-admitted degree-seeking students. Secondary students at state universities had a 2.87 grade point average compared with a 2.59 grade point average for first-year postsecondary students. At the University of Minnesota, secondary students earned a 3.08 grade point average, while new freshmen earned a 2.59 grade point average.

Table 2.13: Participants' Grade Point Averages Compared With Regularly Admitted Postsecondary Students, 1994-95

	Technical Colleges	Community Colleges	State Universities	University of Minnesota	University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Correspondence Program
Program Participants	2.31	2.78	2.87	3.08	3.10
Regularly Admitted Postsecondary Students	2.69	2.37[a]	2.59[b]	2.59[b]	3.40

Sources: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system office, 1995, and University of Minnesota, 1995.

[a]Includes all new degree seekers.

[b]Includes all new freshmen.

Secondary students did somewhat worse than their postsecondary counterparts at public technical colleges and in the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities correspondence program (also known as Independent Study). Program participants who took technical college courses earned a 2.31 grade point average while other students earned a 2.69 grade point average. Although secondary students enrolled in the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities correspondence program earned the highest grade point average (3.10), this was lower than the 3.40 average of all students enrolled in correspondence courses.

According to University of Minnesota officials, the correspondence program at the Twin Cities campus provides increased access to postsecondary courses and has been used mainly for special cases when students would have difficulty attending courses on campus. More than one-third (36 percent) of participants during the 1994-95 school year were from outstate Minnesota. The university first screens and monitors the secondary students who enroll in correspondence courses. Students can register, order books, and complete assignments by mail or e-mail, sometimes using video cassettes as well. They receive a study guide written by university faculty or other experts approved by academic departments that directs

students' reading, lesson completion, and learning. They also receive a one-on-one evaluation by instructors for all work submitted. A sampling of courses that secondary students took in Fall 1995 included history, mathematics, psychology, composition, and languages such as Latin, Russian, French, German, Spanish, and Norwegian.

We were not able to systematically obtain grades or grade point averages for program participants in private colleges. Because they do not operate as a system as state schools do, they do not collect data in a similar manner, and it would have been difficult and time consuming for them to calculate grade point averages of program participants compared with regularly admitted students. Of the two private colleges that did so at our request, results were mixed.[14] In one private Twin Cities college, program participants earned a 2.45 grade point average in their college courses while new freshman earned a 2.58 grade point average. But at another private Twin Cities college, program participants did much better, earning a 3.18 grade point average during the 1994-95 school year compared with a 2.85 grade point average earned by regular freshmen.

According to secondary students, participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program had little effect on their overall grade point averages.[15] Forty-one percent said that participating had no effect, 28 percent said their grade point average went "up a little," and 22 percent said that it went "down a little." Few students overall said that their grade point averages went "up considerably" (8 percent) or "down considerably" (1 percent).

However, we found that these assessments varied by the type of postsecondary school that participants attended. Students who attended public technical colleges (18 percent), state universities (12 percent), and private colleges (10 percent) were more likely to report that their grade point averages went "up considerably" than students attending the University of Minnesota (7 percent) or community colleges (4 percent). In contrast, just 7 percent of secondary students attending technical colleges said that their grade point average went "down a little," while 16 to 25 percent of students in other systems said this.

A few students were placed on academic probation or were otherwise sanctioned because of poor performance.

Finally, we also asked postsecondary administrators about the success of secondary students on their campuses, as shown in Table 2.14. According to these data, 9 percent of secondary students were placed on academic probation during the 1994-95 school year, 3 percent received grades too low to continue to take courses at the postsecondary school, and 2 percent received grades too low to continue taking courses full-time on campus.

14 Concordia College, St. Paul, and the University of St. Thomas gave us data on students' grade point averages.

15 Overall grade point averages take into consideration how well students did in both their secondary and postsecondary courses.

Table 2.14: Program Participants' Status After Taking Postsecondary Courses, 1994-95

Percent of Participants Who:	Technical Colleges	Community Colleges	State Universities	University of Minnesota	Private Colleges	Private Vocational Schools	Overall
Continued to take campus classes after the first term	69%	84%	67%	89%	80%	98%	77%
Received grades too low to take any more campus courses.	6	3	1	3	1	0	3
Received grades too low to continue taking campus classes full time	2	4	1	< 1	< 1	0	2
Placed on academic probation	14	10	2	15	< 1	0	9
Suspended from campus courses for reasons other than grades	0	< 1	< 1	0	0	0	1

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995.

We found that:

- **Program participants who attended public technical colleges fared worse than participants who took courses at other types of postsecondary schools.**

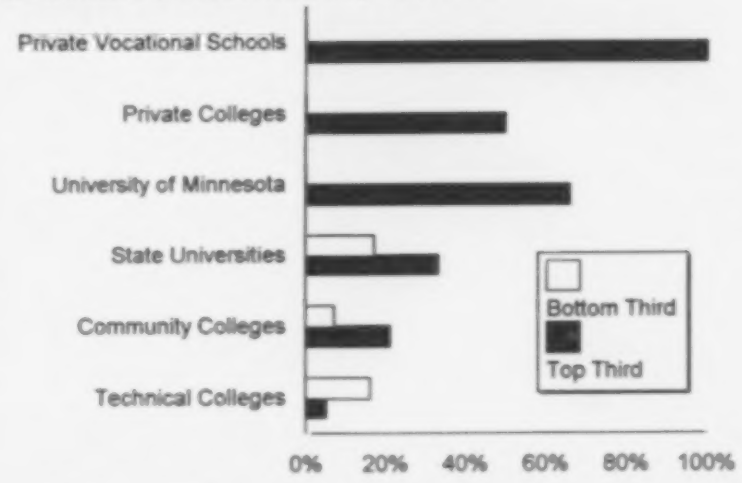
According to data collected in our survey of postsecondary school administrators, 14 percent of secondary students who attended public technical colleges were placed on academic probation and 6 percent received grades too low to continue in the program. Although community colleges and the University of Minnesota also placed high percentages of students on academic probation (10 and 15 percent respectively), each discontinued only 3 percent of secondary students due to low grades.

We also asked postsecondary administrators to generally compare secondary students' academic performance with that of their regularly-admitted classmates. These data are shown in Figure 2.10. According to technical college administrators, secondary students in technical colleges were less likely to earn grades that placed them with the top one-third of their classmates and were more likely to be in with the bottom one-third of classmates.

Overall, our data indicate that program participants tended to do better in postsecondary schools that had higher admission requirements for secondary students than for regular postsecondary students. Therefore, we recommend that:

- **The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities should establish a general, uniform policy for admitting secondary students who enroll in technical colleges through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

Figure 2.10: Postsecondary School Administrators' Overall Assessment of Program Participants' Academic Performance, 1994-95



Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Survey of Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995.

Such a policy might require counseling, placement tests, interviews, and/or a certain level of academic performance, subject to individual exceptions. As discussed in Chapter 1, the University of Minnesota, state universities, community colleges, and private colleges all had higher admission requirements for program participants than for postsecondary students, and secondary students in these systems generally outperformed their postsecondary counterparts. On the other hand, technical college administrators indicated that they generally had the same admission requirements for secondary and regular postsecondary students during the 1994-95 school year, and program participants were less successful than other technical college students. In addition, program participants at technical colleges were least likely to meet with a postsecondary counselor before starting classes. As discussed earlier, technical college administrators were more likely to indicate that fewer of their secondary students were mature, self-motivated, or appropriately placed than administrators from other systems.

SUMMARY

We found that student participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year varied widely among school districts and high schools. Our analyses showed that distance to a city with a postsecondary school was the most important factor in explaining variations in participation rates for school districts and high schools outside the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. In the Twin Cities metropolitan area, no single characteristic of districts or schools was strongly related to student participation.

Although the statutory purpose of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program is to provide students with an array of rigorous and varied courses, our data suggest that secondary curriculum enhancements have little effect on student participation rates. According to students and administrators, the two most important reasons why students participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year were to get a head start on college credits and to save money.

Program participants tended to enroll in core academic courses at postsecondary schools, most frequently social science and language arts courses. Overall, students who participated in the program did better in their postsecondary courses than regularly-admitted first-year students, except at technical colleges. In addition, technical school administrators were less likely than other administrators to report that the secondary students who took courses at their schools were mature, self-motivated, or appropriately placed.

Program Assessment

CHAPTER 3

As we discussed in Chapter 1, the decision to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program rests with students, parents, and postsecondary institutions--not with school districts.[1] But, because school districts receive less general education revenue when students take postsecondary classes elsewhere, some policy makers have been concerned that some school administrators may discourage students' interest in the program. In addition, educators have argued that the program has been detrimental to school districts and that postsecondary schools have not adequately monitored secondary students' academic performance on campus.

Because of these concerns, the Legislative Audit Commission asked us to determine the program's fiscal impact and identify any problems that have arisen for school administrators or barriers that have stood in the way of program participants. We asked the following questions:

- **How satisfied have program participants and school administrators been with the way in which the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program has operated, and what problems, if any, have they encountered?**

- **To what extent have secondary students been encouraged or discouraged from attending classes on postsecondary campuses?**

- **How have schools been affected financially, educationally, and operationally?**

- **What has been the overall fiscal impact of the program on students, school districts, postsecondary schools, and the state?**

In general, our study showed that most of the student participants, their parents, postsecondary school administrators, and directors of alternative secondary schools were satisfied and had few problems with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. However, this was not true of high school administrators. We estimated that K-12 education expenditures were $11.8 million less as a result of the program in 1993-94 (most recent available data). Conversely, the program increased the state's postsecondary costs by an estimated $16.3 million in 1993-94

1 *Minn. Stat.* §123.3514, Subd. 4, 4a, 4b.

and provided a net financial benefit of almost $10 million to student participants and their families who, without the program, would have had to pay standard prices for postsecondary tuition, fees, and books. Finally, although high school administrators in our survey attributed numerous problems to the program, we found no evidence that secondary school staff have systematically or effectively influenced the rate of students' participation.

SATISFACTION WITH THE PROGRAM

In each of our surveys, we included questions that asked about respondents' overall attitude toward the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. As shown by Table 3.1:

- **Most program participants, their parents, postsecondary school administrators, and directors of alternative secondary schools were satisfied with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, but most high school administrators were not.**

Table 3.1: Overall Evaluation of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program by Program Participants, Parents, and School Administrators, 1994-95

STUDENTS	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
"Overall, how satisfied were you with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program last year ..."	< 1%	1%	3%	24%	73%

PARENTS		Definitely Not Encourage	Probably Not Encourage	Probably Would Encourage	Definitely Would Encourage
"Looking back on your child's experience in the program last year, if you had it to do all over again, how likely would you be to encourage your child to participate again ...?"		1%	4%	13%	82%

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
"The program is generally performing in a satisfactory manner"					
High Schools	10%	25%	24%	36%	6%
Alternative Schools	3	7	7	61	21
Postsecondary Schools	1	9	17	60	12

Note: Some figures do not total 100 due to rounding.

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Surveys of Students (n = 300), Parents (n = 300), Secondary Schools (n = 327 high schools and 74 alternative schools), and Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995. Student and parent surveys are subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

In our survey of student participants, 73 percent chose the most positive response of "very satisfied" to describe their experience with the program last year (1994-95) and another 24 percent said they were "somewhat satisfied." Three percent gave a neutral answer, and only 1 percent expressed any dissatisfaction.[2] Similarly, when we asked parents how likely they would be to encourage their children to participate again, 82 percent said they "definitely" would be encouraging, and another 13 percent said they "probably" would be so. The remaining 5 percent answered that they "probably" or "definitely" would not encourage participation again.

Almost all students were satisfied with the program last year.

We asked school administrators whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "The program is generally performing in a satisfactory manner." Seventy-two percent of the postsecondary school administrators said either they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement. Those from the community colleges and University of Minnesota campuses were almost completely in agreement that the program has been performing satisfactorily. Representatives of about two-thirds of the technical college campuses said they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with that statement, as did four out of the five administrators of private vocational schools surveyed and respondents from five of the seven participating state universities. The least enthusiasm for the program came from private college officials. They were least likely (39 percent) to say that they agreed that the program was functioning satisfactorily and most likely to disagree (46 percent).

On the secondary level, we found that 82 percent of the alternative secondary school directors "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the program was performing satisfactorily.[3] Ten percent disagreed, and the rest were noncommittal. In contrast, only 42 percent of the high school administrators said they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement, 24 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 35 percent "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" that the program was performing in a satisfactory manner.

Students' enthusiasm for the program undoubtedly has been related to the benefits that they have associated with it and the few problems they said they had in participating. We found that:

- **One-half to three-quarters of the students in our survey of participants attributed major personal benefits to the program, based on their experiences in 1994-95.**

More than 70 percent of the students in our survey said they got the following major benefits: They became better prepared academically, grew more knowledgeable about what to expect from college, saved time and money, and learned more

2 Of the 300 students in our survey, only 3 expressed overall dissatisfaction with the program, and we found that they attended three different types of postsecondary schools (a technical college, community college, and a private college). In addition, we found no apparent relationship between students' overall level of satisfaction and their families' level of income or education, their geographic location, or the type of postsecondary school they selected.

3 Alternative secondary schools include area learning centers, charter schools, and special programs for students who previously dropped out of high school, are at risk of dropping out, or do not fit well into traditional high schools.

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than they could have in high school. (See Table 3.2.) Also, about one-half said the program provided a major benefit by helping them learn more about "what to do the next year" and their academic strengths and weaknesses. In addition, at least 60 percent said that the program helped them achieve more academically, made them more interested in their education, gave them greater self-confidence, and made them more eager to challenge themselves, as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.2: Students' Assessment of the Benefits of Participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95

	Percent Who Said It Was a:		
	Major Benefit	Minor Benefit	Not a Benefit
Learning more than they could in high school	76%	18%	6%
Saving time because courses count for secondary and postsecondary credit	75	19	6
Knowing what to expect from college	75	21	4
Becoming better prepared academically	74	22	4
Saving money because tuition was free	72	22	6
Knowing more about what to do next year	56	28	16
Learning about academic strengths/weaknesses	51	38	12

Note: The question was, "Now I'm going to read a list of possible benefits you might have gotten from participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program last year. As I read each one, please tell me whether it was a major or minor benefit to you, or no benefit at all."

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Student Survey (n = 300), 1995, subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

Table 3.3: Students' Assessment of How They Have Changed as a Result of Participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95

	Percent Who Said That They Were:		
	More	Less	About the Same
Achieving academically	60%	3%	37%
Interested in their education	66	1	33
Self-confident	62	1	37
Eager to challenge themselves	61	1	38

Note: The question was, "Because of your participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program last year, do you think you've changed in any of the following ways: Are you achieving more or less academically or about the same ... more or less interested in your education or about the same ... more or less self-confident or about the same ... more or less eager to challenge yourself or about the same?"

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Student Survey (n = 300) 1995, subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

SOURCES OF DISSATISFACTION

When we asked about a series of possible problems that the student participants might have had:

- **Sixty-two percent of the students said they had no major problems using the program in 1994-95.**

Our survey listed eleven possible problems, and we asked the students whether each one had been a major problem, a minor problem, or no problem at all. As shown by Table 3.4, students' two greatest problems, each affecting 36 percent to a greater or lesser extent, had little to do with the way in which the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program has been implemented but rather with scheduling difficulties and the availability of specifically desired postsecondary courses. About 80 percent of the students said they had no problem at all with such issues as postsecondary grades, maintaining the necessary number of credits to graduate from high school, unhelpful postsecondary instructors, or "fitting into the college scene." At least 70 percent of the students said they had no problems with secondary staff, the amount of time available for high school activities, or transportation.

Students' greatest problems had little to do with the program itself.

As shown, at most, 12 percent of the students said they had one of the major problems listed in Table 3.4. To examine who specifically might have been unsupportive, we asked a series of questions to determine which secondary staff were involved in the students' decision to participate and whether the students regarded their involvement as encouraging, discouraging, or neutral. Our analysis showed that:

- **Students rarely reported that secondary teachers, counselors, or administrators discouraged their participation, and there was no consistent pattern to the perceived discouragement.**

In light of the sometimes questionable motivations and poor academic performance of a number of program participants, as we discussed in Chapter 2, we think it is reasonable to expect that high school staff would have discouraged some individual students from participating. To detect potential patterns of discouragement by certain school districts, we examined specific responses from all students who indicated that secondary teachers, counselors, and/or administrators such as principals or superintendents had discouraged their decision to participate. At most, 18 of the 300 students in our survey had mentioned discouraging counselors, discouraging teachers, or discouraging administrators. Results showed that students came from a wide range of school districts and that some of the same students perceived discouragement from more than one source.

We also asked parents whether they thought that their children's high school staff had been encouraging, discouraging, or neutral about participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Sixty percent said the high school staff had been "very" or "somewhat" encouraging, 21 percent said the staff had been neither encouraging nor discouraging, and 19 percent reported some discouragement.

Table 3.4: Program Participants' Assessment of Problems They May Have Had Using the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1994-95

	Percent Who Said It Was:		
	Major Problem	Minor Problem	No Problem At All
Scheduling difficulties between secondary and postsecondary schools	12%	24%	64%
Secondary staff not supporting your decision to participate	11	18	72
Being able to enroll in desired postsecondary classes	8	28	64
Transportation to and from postsecondary school	5	24	71
Not having enough time for regular high school activities like sports, clubs, and dances	5	23	71
Transferring credits from your postsecondary school back to secondary school	6	21	73
Hurting chances for future financial aid scholarships	5	16	79
Getting poor grades in postsecondary courses (that is, below average)	3	17	80
Unhelpful postsecondary instructors or staff	4	17	79
Falling behind in the number of high school credits necessary to graduate	4	13	82
Not fitting into the college scene	1	16	83

Note: Some figures do not total 100 due to rounding.

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Student Survey (n = 300) 1995, subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

Note: The question was, "Some students might have problems using the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. I am going to list some possible problems and, as I read each one, please tell me whether it was a major or minor problem for you last year, or no problem at all."

Most students said they had no problem with unsupportive secondary staff, but this varied somewhat by region.

We found that the parents' responses corresponded roughly to the students' reports of problems with unsupportive high school staff and that there was a slight but statistically significant geographic basis to the perceived discouragement.

At least 60 percent of the students in each region of the state said they had no problem with high school staff generally being unsupportive. Where problems existed, they were predominantly mentioned by students from northern and southern Minnesota. Our analysis indicated that students from Minneapolis and St. Paul were least likely to mention problems with high school staff, followed by their peers in the central region and Twin Cities suburbs.

Overall, we concluded that:

- **Secondary schools have generally been supportive of student participants, but staff may have discouraged some individual students.**

The small percentage of individuals who specifically reported being discouraged by high school staff was in the same low range as the percentage of "F" or "No credit" grades that program participants received in postsecondary courses (that is, 4 to 9 percent as reported in Chapter 2). Thus at least some of the students who reported that they had been discouraged may have been appropriately counseled. Also, it is important to note that what students and parents regard as discouragement may be a reflection of school districts carrying out their legal duty to do as much as possible to make students and their parents or guardians "fully aware of the risks and possible consequences of enrolling in postsecondary courses," particularly the "consequences of failing or not completing postsecondary courses" and "the effect of enrolling ... on the pupil's ability to complete the required high school graduation requirements."[4]

School districts are legally bound to warn students and parents of program risks.

SCHOOLS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE PROGRAM

In our surveys of secondary and postsecondary school administrators, we asked several of the same questions for comparison purposes. The results are shown in Table 3.5 and can be summarized as follows:

- **Secondary and postsecondary school administrators shared many of the same opinions about the operation and effects of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

Both types of administrators generally agreed with a statement to the effect that the program has provided a wider variety of options to students (one of its statutory purposes), but to a lesser extent that it has promoted rigorous academic pursuits (its other statutory purpose). The postsecondary officials were more likely than secondary school administrators to agree that the program has fostered rigorous academic pursuits. Other areas of general agreement between secondary and postsecondary school administrators were that students have generally gained from their participation, the program is readily available to interested students, and parents and students need to be more aware of the risks associated with the program.[5]

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4 Minn. Stat. §123.3514, Subd. 4a.

5 However, when we asked students in our survey if they saw any need for increased warnings about the potential risks of participating in the program, 69 percent indicated this was not necessary. Nineteen percent said there was some room for improvement, and 12 percent said there was "much" or "critical" need to improve along this line.

Table 3.5: School Administrators' Opinions of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program

	Percent Who Said They Agree or Strongly Agree	
	Secondary Administrators	Postsecondary Administrators
The program has generally provided a wider variety of options to students	83%	95%
Parents and students need to be more aware of the risks associated with the program	77	78
The program has generally promoted rigorous academic pursuits	30	58
The program is readily available to interested students	81	59
Students generally have gained from their participation	63	85
The program is generally performing in a satisfactory manner	48	72
Secondary schools should have more control over students' use of the program	63	43
The time and costs of implementing and running the program have outweighed its benefits	32	23
The program has had an overall negative impact on secondary schools	32	21
Secondary staff have consistently encouraged appropriate students to participate	37	12
Postsecondary staff have supported secondary students' enrollment	N/A	71
Postsecondary schools need to be more selective about admissions	N/A	58
The program has had an overall positive effect on postsecondary schools	N/A	40

N/A = Not asked.

Note: The question was, "Please indicate whether you generally agree or disagree with the following statements about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program."

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Surveys of Secondary Schools (n = 401) and Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995.

Secondary school administrators were less positive about the program than post-secondary administrators.

Also, 43 percent of postsecondary administrators and 63 percent of secondary administrators agreed with the statement: "Secondary schools should have more control over students' use of the program." At the same time, 58 percent of the postsecondary officials agreed that they themselves need to be more selective about the students they admit through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Technical college administrators were especially strong in suggesting that

they should be more selective: 75 percent agreed with the statement.[6] In addition, about 20 percent of postsecondary administrators and 30 percent of secondary administrators said they agreed or strongly agreed that "the time and costs of implementing and running the program have outweighed its benefits" and that the program has had an "overall negative effect on secondary schools."

PERCEIVED PROGRAM STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

We also found that:

- **Both secondary and postsecondary officials listed numerous strengths and weaknesses of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, including negative educational, administrative, and financial effects on secondary schools.**

School administrators mentioned several more program weaknesses than strengths.

In our surveys of school administrators, we offered space for respondents individually to describe the major strengths and weaknesses of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. We later categorized the administrators' written remarks, and the results are shown in Tables 3.6 and 3.7. Overall, they mentioned several more major weaknesses than strengths.

The two most commonly perceived strengths of the program, according to secondary and postsecondary administrators, were that it provided (1) more course options and more educational enrichment for students, and (2) opportunities for advanced students to be challenged beyond high school curricula. The next most commonly mentioned strengths were that using the program saves money on college costs and allows high school students to earn college credits. Some of the other strengths mentioned by secondary and postsecondary administrators were that the program provides opportunities for students to sample college, to form career goals earlier in life, and to find courses that meet various special needs.

On the other hand, the most commonly mentioned major weakness of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program was students' lack of social, emotional, or academic preparation. This weakness was cited by 23 percent of the secondary administrators and 29 percent of the postsecondary administrators. Twenty-six percent of the postsecondary administrators but none of the secondary administrators also identified high schools' failure to provide program information or support as a major weakness. Administrative problems were another major weakness, mentioned by 22 percent of the secondary and 12 percent of the postsecondary administrators. In addition, 12 percent of secondary administrators and 18 percent of postsecondary administrators said that the program has put financial considerations ahead of students' needs. Another 12 percent of secondary administrators and 15 percent of postsecondary administrators also said that students used it to avoid the challenges of high school. Some of the other weaknesses mentioned by

6 In Chapter 2, we recommended that the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system develop a general, uniform policy for admitting secondary students to technical colleges.

School administrators agreed that one of the program's major strengths was in providing more options and educational enrichment.

Table 3.6: Major Strengths of Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program Volunteered by School Administrators

	Secondary	Postsecondary
Gives students more course options and more educational enrichment	38%	43%
Allows advanced students to learn beyond high school curriculum and be further challenged academically	21	43
Allows students, parents and/or the state to save money on college	15	12
Allows students to earn college credit before graduating from high school	10	8
Allows students to sample college and be exposed to its demands	7	8
Allows students who do not thrive in traditional high school to find suitable courses	6	11
Helps students form ideas of career goals earlier in life	2	7
Promotes higher learning standards	1	7
Other	1	0
Provides technical college courses and hands-on training not otherwise available	0	8
Provides courses addressing various learning styles	0	5
Rewards students who have done well and worked hard	0	1

Note: The question was, "In your opinion, what are the major strengths of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program?" Multiple responses were common, and as a result percentages do not necessarily add to 100.

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Surveys of Secondary Schools (n = 401) and Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995.

secondary and postsecondary administrators were that the program harms the financial status of high schools, deprives high schools of students who would otherwise be leaders or academically exceptional, and provides limited access to students depending on their geographic location, grade in school, and enrollment in public (not private) secondary schools.

Several postsecondary administrators expressed a concern, not shared by secondary administrators, that colleges were being harmed financially. Officials of private colleges and the University of Minnesota were most concerned about financial harm to their institutions. Technical college officials complained that secondary schools have been using them as a "dumping ground" or last resort for certain students. Secondary administrators' special concerns were that some program participants enrolled in courses already offered at high schools and that program participants have been deprived of high school experiences.

Table 3.7: Major Weaknesses of Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program Volunteered by School Administrators

	Secondary	Postsecondary
Students not prepared academically, emotionally, and/or socially	23%	29%
High schools fail to provide information to students about the program or support to those in the program	0	26
Program has administrative problems related to admissions, coordination, control, scheduling, counseling, collecting books, and/or other rules	22	12
Places financial considerations of parents, students, and/or institutions ahead of student needs or fairness to taxpayers	12	18
Students use program to avoid high school challenges (such as structured schedules, no smoking) or to take less rigorous courses	12	15
Harms financial status of high schools	8	12
Harms colleges financially	0	11
Deprives high schools of students who would be leaders or academically exceptional students	6	8
Program is last resort for high-risk students, or "dumping ground" for poor students	0	7
Students enroll for the wrong reasons	0	5
Access limited by geography, type of secondary school, and students' grade in school	5	11
Students enroll in courses offered at high school	4	0
Students deprived of high school activities, interaction, and/or overall experience	4	0
Limited course offerings	1	0
Not enough opportunity for vocational or average to below-average students to participate	1	0
Other	2	0

Note: The question was, "In your opinion, what are the major weaknesses of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program? Multiple responses were common and, as a result percentages do not necessarily add to 100.

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Surveys of Secondary Schools (n = 401) and Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995.

When asked specifically whether they had any of a number of potential problems due to the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, we found that:

- **Secondary school officials were more likely than postsecondary school administrators to cite negative effects from the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

As shown by Table 3.8, 23 percent of the secondary administrators said the program presented problems in budgeting resources and 20 percent in planning and scheduling classes, compared with 8 and 7 percent of postsecondary administrators, respectively. Other problems mentioned by at least 12 percent of the secondary administrators involved support services for interested and participating students, student participation in school activities, staff morale, and staffing levels. Additional problems mentioned by less than 10 percent of the secondary administrators included student/staff interaction, communication with postsecondary schools, the number and quality of secondary courses, parental involvement, and student morale.

Secondary administrators' greatest problems concerned budgeting and class planning.

In contrast, postsecondary administrators' problems were fewer and less prevalent. Their two most common problems, mentioned by 14 percent each, involved staffing levels and support services for students who participated or were interested in

Table 3.8: Negative Effects of Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program Reported by School Administrators

	Secondary	Postsecondary
Ability to budget resources	23%	8%
Ability to plan and schedule classes	20	7
Providing interested and participating students with needed support services	14	14
Staff morale	13	7
Student participation in school activities	14	1
Ability to provide appropriate staffing levels	12	14
Student/staff interaction	9	4
Communication between schools	9	5
Number of courses taught	6	0
Parental involvement in children's education	5	5
Student morale	4	0
Cooperative efforts with postsecondary schools	4	11
Quality of courses taught	4	0
Use of technology such as interactive TV	3	0

Note: The question was, "First, please indicate whether and how the following aspects of your campus have been affected by the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program. [If so:] then please indicate whether this has been a problem."

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Surveys of Secondary Schools (n = 401) and Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995.

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participating. Eleven percent of the postsecondary officials also said that they had problems working cooperatively with secondary schools, 8 percent that there were negative effects on their ability to budget resources, and 7 percent that there were negative effects on staff morale and their ability to plan and schedule classes. Four other problems were reported by no more than 5 percent of the postsecondary administrators, as shown by Table 3.8.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL OFFICIALS

We also analyzed the problems reported by high school administrators separately from those of alternative school directors and concluded that:

- **Alternative secondary school officials reported fewer negative effects from the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program than Minnesota high school administrators.**

Other concerns involved secondary staffing levels, support services, staff morale, and student-staff interaction.

This may help to account for the alternative school directors' higher level of overall satisfaction, as was shown in Table 3.1. For example, about one-third of the high school administrators reported that their ability to budget resources was a problem because of the program, and one-fourth said that their ability to plan and schedule classes had been compromised. In contrast, just 8 percent of the directors of alternative secondary schools in our survey reported that their ability to budget resources was negatively affected, and 7 percent said that their ability to plan and schedule classes had suffered. Ten to 20 percent of the high school administrators also said that the following items were negatively affected by the program: staff morale, student-staff interaction, student participation in school activities, ability to provide appropriate staffing, and ability to provide participating or interested students with needed support services. Of the alternative school directors, 7 percent said their ability to provide support services to interested or participating students had been adversely affected, but no more than 3 percent of this group cited other negative effects.

NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS

We asked whether a number of program improvements might be needed and how much improvement was necessary. As shown in Table 3.9:

- **Student participants, their parents, and school administrators in our surveys generally agreed that there is a need for better information about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**

About one-half of the students and postsecondary administrators said that information provided by secondary schools was in "much" or "critical" need of improve-

Table 3.9: Need for Program Improvements Suggested by Students, Parents, and School Administrators

	Percent Who Said There Is "Much" or "Critical" Need to Improve			
			Administrators	
	Students	Parents	Secondary	Postsecondary
Information provided by secondary school	50%	37%	5%	48%
Information provided by postsecondary school	25	29	22	6
Communication between secondary and postsecondary schools	36	N/A	22	12
Counseling by secondary school	27	32	7	55
Counseling by postsecondary school	17	18	29	3
Information from postsecondary school about academic performance	9	17	47	N/A
Rules or procedures for transferring credits back to secondary school	16	18	N/A	22
Transportation	11	N/A	17	8

N/A = Not asked.

Note: The question was, "In your opinion, do any of the following aspects of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program need improvement, insofar as the program allows students to take courses at postsecondary schools?"

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Student and Parent Survey (n = 300 each,) and Secondary School Survey (n = 401), and Postsecondary Campus Survey (n = 76), 1995. The student and parent surveys are subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

ment, and 37 percent of parents agreed.[7] However, only 5 percent of the secondary administrators saw "much" or "critical" need for them to improve the information that they provide about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. In general, Table 3.9 shows that it was not uncommon for the object of improvement to diminish the importance of the need. For example, 25 percent of the student participants, 29 percent of their parents, and 22 percent of the secondary administrators suggested the need for substantial improvement in the information provided by postsecondary schools, but only 6 percent of the postsecondary administrators were in agreement. And 55 percent of the postsecondary administrators indicated a great need to improve counseling by secondary schools, a view shared by about 27 percent of student participants and 32 percent of their parents

7 As shown in the table, one specific way in which secondary schools could improve information is to clarify rules and procedures for transferring credits back to them from postsecondary schools.

but by only 7 percent of the secondary administrators. Conversely, 29 percent of secondary administrators, 17 percent of the students, and 18 percent of their parents identified a need for improved postsecondary counseling, while only 3 percent of the postsecondary administrators agreed.

Compared with students, parents, and postsecondary administrators, the secondary administrators expressed notable concern about improving the information that they receive from postsecondary schools concerning their students' academic performance. Only 17 percent of the parents in our survey shared this concern, but we think secondary administrators may have a compelling reason for their perspective because, ultimately, they would bear the burden of explaining why program participants might not qualify for high school graduation. The secondary administrators also were more concerned than student participants or postsecondary administrators about transportation, which may be related to the practical difficulty of ensuring that part-time program participants are back in secondary classes on schedule.

One of the students' particular concerns was about communication between secondary and postsecondary schools. Thirty-six percent of last year's program participants said there was "much" or "critical" need to improve this. The same need was identified by 22 percent of secondary administrators, along with 12 percent of postsecondary administrators.

Students were particularly concerned about communication between secondary and postsecondary schools.

We also asked school administrators about the potential need to improve the way in which the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program operates. Table 3.10 indicates that 54 percent of the secondary administrators and 41 percent of the postsecondary administrators would prefer improvements upon the amount of payment that they receive for students who participate. Aside from that, secondary administrators indicated most concern about procedures to collect books and materials from their students after they have finished postsecondary courses. Although statutes say that each student must return all textbooks and equipment to school districts after finishing postsecondary courses, we learned that this can be difficult to enforce and not always worth the effort.[8] Some administrators told us they had little use for such materials and there was little to be gained in reselling the items. From the students' perspective, some may want to keep the books for later reference, just as many regularly admitted postsecondary students do.

A third concern was the nature of the postsecondary courses that program participants selected. Thirty-seven percent of secondary administrators and 15 percent of postsecondary administrators said this was something in "much" or "critical" need of improvement. In some cases, as we have previously shown, students were drawn to the program to avoid certain high school teachers or courses or to take less challenging courses. Some secondary administrators told us that the courses avoided may be an important part of their high school curriculum and key to students' achieving certain educational outcomes before graduation. We also learned that students sometimes enrolled in postsecondary classes that duplicated previous coursework or were similar to classes routinely offered by high schools. For sec-

8 *Minn. Stat.* §123.3514, Subd. 7a establishes that textbooks and equipment provided to program participants are the property of the students' school district of residence.

Table 3.10: Other Program Improvements Suggested by School Administrators

	Percent Who Said There Is "Much" or "Critical" Need to Improve	
	Secondary	Postsecondary
Amount of payment received for students who participate	54%	41%
Procedures to collect books and materials at the end of the course	44	N/A
Nature of postsecondary courses students choose to take	37	15
Information provided by the state department responsible for public education	18	37
Information from secondary schools about graduation requirements	N/A	32
Timing of student notification about enrolling in postsecondary courses	28	23
Rules or procedures for credit transfer to postsecondary schools	N/A	23

N/A = Not asked.

Note: The question was, "In your opinion, do any of the following aspects of the Postsecondary Enrollments Options Program need improvement, insofar as the program allows students to take courses at postsecondary schools?"

Sources: Office of the Legislative Auditor Surveys of Secondary Schools (n = 401) and Postsecondary Campuses (n = 76), 1995.

ondary administrators, this can affect course planning and scheduling, especially when they do not necessarily know whether or when their students enrolled in postsecondary classes. As shown by Table 3.10, the timing of students' notification of their postsecondary enrollment represented a significant concern not only for 28 percent of the secondary administrators but also for 23 percent of postsecondary administrators.

Both types of administrators also shared some concern about the program information that is provided by the state department responsible for public education (formerly the Department of Education). In general, this may reflect the confusion, lack of communication, and ambiguities of program coordination that we have previously discussed. Another example of coordination issues is suggested by the fact that 32 percent of the postsecondary administrators in our survey said there is "much" or "critical" need to improve the information they receive about high school students' graduation requirements, which vary from district to district.

In light of concerns expressed by the administrators, program participants, and their parents and other findings of our study, we recommend that:

- **Secondary and postsecondary schools should better coordinate their efforts and direct students to the most appropriate schools and courses.**

Overall, we see no need to make major changes in how the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program operates. However, in our view, the program would be less burdensome to all concerned if secondary and postsecondary schools at the local level worked together more closely on the issues of admission policies, secondary class planning and scheduling, and students' academic performance and choice of courses. Although in some cases, schools have had strained relationships, others have successfully resolved their differences. If schools worked together more closely and clarified their roles, students also would benefit inasmuch as they have complained of poor communication between schools and lack of information.

FISCAL IMPACT

Working with the Department of Children, Families and Learning, the Department of Finance, and legislative and postsecondary system staff, we first estimated how much the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program cost state and local government in 1993-94. This estimate is restricted to the budgetary impact on school districts, public postsecondary education systems, and the state. Second, we estimated several costs and benefits that could be attributed to the program but were not formally budgeted. For example, we estimated costs associated with high school juniors and seniors who were not previously enrolled in public school districts but may have done so to take advantage of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

Overall, the results show that:

- **The Postsecondary Enrollment Options program reduced state and local expenditures for K-12 education by about $11.8 million during the 1993-94 school year but increased the state's postsecondary costs by an estimated $16.3 million.**[9]

- **By participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1993-94, students and their parents avoided paying an estimated $10.9 million in costs for tuition, fees, and books if the same students had enrolled in the same postsecondary classes without the program.**

The program's net cost to the state and localities was about $4.5 million in 1993-94.

Table 3.11 shows that the net budgetary and non-budgetary cost of the program to the state and localities was about $4.5 million during the 1993-94 school year and that the net financial benefit to students and parents, after subtracting education support expenses such as transportation, was $9.6 million. Another way to view this benefit is that students may gain financially in the future if they apply postsecondary credits earned during high school to a postsecondary degree.

9 The 1993-94 school year corresponds to the state's fiscal year 1994.

Table 3.11: Estimated Net Cost and Benefits of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1993-94

FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:	
Cost of postsecondary education	$16,336,077
Savings on K-12 education	-11,841,258
Net state and local cost	$ 4,494,819
FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS AND PARENTS:	
Cost-free tuition, books, fees, and materials	$10,906,150
Cost of education support	-1,294,626
Net benefit to program participants and parents	$ 9,611,524

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor, Department of Children, Families and Learning, Department of Finance, Higher Education Services Office, and public postsecondary systems.

STATE AND LOCAL BUDGETARY IMPACT

To estimate the net impact of the program on state and local government expenditures, we used the following equation:

- the amount of state funding school districts actually received in 1993-94,
- (minus) the amount of state funding districts would have received in the absence of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program,
- (plus) the amount paid to districts by the state to help low-income program participants with transportation,
- (plus) costs for the former Department of Education to administer the program,
- (plus) the amount paid by the former Department of Education to postsecondary schools for enrolling secondary students,
- (plus) state appropriations to public postsecondary schools due to enrolling secondary students through the program.

K-12 Education Budget Savings

We estimated K-12 education savings mainly on the basis of actual payments by the former Department of Education to school districts. According to the department, school districts received a total of $3.152 billion in state aid and local property tax levies during the 1993-94 school year, following deductions, if any, because of postsecondary enrollments through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

Our estimate of the hypothetical amount of funding that school districts would have received from the state formula in the absence of the enrollment options program is based on the same formula as has been developed and used in the past by the former Department of Education in consultation with the House Ways and Means Committee. Using this method, total funding for the 1993-94 school year would have been about $3.164 billion without the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

The net difference between the two calculations above was $12.02 million. Factoring in the difference in enrollment as a result of the program, we calculated the impact on school districts:

- **Among those school districts where students participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during 1993-94, the median difference in education aid was $14,149.**[10]

At most, the state's three largest school districts, all in the Twin Cities area, would have had aid reductions of about $708,000 to $937,000. At the other extreme, two outstate districts would have seen reductions of only $58 to $65.

The median reduction in education aid was $4,017 per participant in school districts where students used the program.

Another way to describe the impact of the enrollment options program is as a percentage of the districts' total funding, which takes into account the overall size of the districts' budgets. This calculation suggested that the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program caused a median reduction of 0.34 percent for school districts with program participants in 1993-94. The largest difference was just over 2 percent.

Looking at funding differences per program participant in weighted pupil units, the median reduction in education aid was an estimated $4,017 each among districts with program participants in 1993-94.[11] But again, there was some variation, depending on the applicability of particular funding provisions such as referendum levies, sparsity aid, and compensatory education revenue.[12] The differences ranged from an estimated $766 to $6,095 per program participant in pupil units. Generally speaking, districts with the greatest funding reductions per pupil unit were those with larger amounts of local referendum levy revenue.

Although these reductions may seem small, some school administrators told us that it was difficult for them to compensate for budgetary changes by laying off teachers (accounting for the greatest portion of their budgets) because the participating students leave not one but numerous different secondary classes and because they are not always notified soon enough to make changes. At the same time, if 10 students participate full time in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, the aid reduction could be equivalent to one teacher's salary.

10 The average reduction in funding was $30,433 per school district, but this average is affected by a few large districts. For this reason, we prefer to use median figures, which reflect the experience of roughly half the districts.

11 Each full-time secondary student equals 1.3 weighted pupil units.

12 See House Ways and Means Committee, *Financing Education in Minnesota 1993-94* (St. Paul, July 1993) for detailed explanations of the elements of the funding formula.

In response to concerns about such financial impact on school districts, the 1995 Legislature enacted Postsecondary Enrollment Options replacement aid.[13] The Department of Children, Families and Learning projected which districts might benefit from this aid and results were mixed. Some districts with large percentage reductions in their budgets due to the program were likely to gain relief, but the same was true for a few districts with small percentage reductions. Also, the department projected that some of the districts with the largest dollar reductions in aid would not receive any benefit at all.

Postsecondary Enrollment Options replacement aid is not targeted to the school districts with the biggest budget reductions.

To determine the amount of state transportation aid for low-income students participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, we consulted records of the former Department of Education.[14] The reimbursement rate was 15 cents per mile, and in 1993-94, only 63 students in 39 districts received transportation aid, for a total cost of $59,696.

We estimated the department's costs to administer the program as $115,000 for salaries and benefits, information services to program participants and others, and indirect costs such as telephones, postage, and office supplies. Table 3.12 shows the specifics for this and calculations above: a reduction in general education aid of about $12 million minus transportation and administrative costs of about $175,000, for net budgetary savings of about $11.8 million on K-12 education due to the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1993-94.

Postsecondary Education Budget Costs

Table 3.12 also shows that the former Department of Education paid about $10.4 million to postsecondary schools for secondary students enrolled through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1993-94. By law, the postsecondary schools, both public and private, received a flat rate of $77.54 per quarter credit or $116.31 per semester credit, to be applied toward tuition, fees, and books for the 1993-94 school year.[15] The per-credit payment rates were not based on any measure of postsecondary costs but rather on rough calculations of the annual state savings on secondary education, divided by full-year equivalent postsecondary credits. In our analysis, we noted that the lower-cost postsecondary schools obviously fared better under the flat-rate payment system than the more costly four-year schools.

Besides the direct per-credit payments to postsecondary schools, the state indirectly reimbursed public postsecondary schools for additional costs they may have incurred as a result of the program.[16] These additional costs were difficult to estimate because they did not appear as a line item in state appropriations and because they depended on the type of postsecondary school (whether a technical or

13 *Minn. Laws* (1st Spec. Sess. 1995), Art. 8, Sec. 1.

14 To qualify for reimbursement, a student must be a member of a family with income at or below the federal poverty guidelines, which are updated annually.

15 *Minn. Stat.* §123.3514, Subd. 6.

16 There are no additional costs to the state for private colleges beyond the flat per-credit payments and transportation aid provided to low-income students who attend private schools.

Table 3.12: Estimated Costs and Benefits of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, 1993-94

	COSTS		BENEFITS	
Budgetary	Per-credit payments from the former Department of Education to post-secondary schools	$10,384,467	Reduction in secondary education aid due to the program	$12,020,976
	Additional costs incurred by public postsecondary schools	5,555,964		
	Cost of transportation aid for low-income paticipants	59,696		
	Administrative costs of the former Department of Education	114,771		
Non-budgetary	Costs due to public secondary enrollment of students who would otherwise be ineligible for the program:		Out-of-pocket value of postsecondary tuition, fees, and books	$10,906,150
	State and local secondary costs	$308,874	Reduced demand for transportation aid	303,623
	Postsecondary costs:	395,646		
	Education support costs incurred by program patici-pants	1,294,616		
TOTAL	Costs	$18,114,044	Benefits	$23,230,749

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor, Department of Children, Families and Learning, and Department of Finance.

community college, a state university, or the University of Minnesota), the specific school, the cost of particular courses in which secondary students enrolled, and other factors.[17]

We considered two different ways to estimate postsecondary schools' additional costs. One was based on the state's higher education funding formula in effect for fiscal year 1994 (the 1993-94 school year) as reflected in the public systems' appropriation requests based on that formula. The second was based on the estimated costs to the state for secondary students to take postsecondary classes through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Ultimately, for four

17 Although a statutory "average cost funding" formula in 1993-94 included a formula for enrollment options students, actual postsecondary education appropriations were not specifically tied to this formula. Also, the formula recognized only certain costs, not all costs.

main reasons, we decided that the latter method provides a better reflection of the cost to the state.

First, had we based our estimate on the statutory appropriations formula, we would not have captured the actual instructional costs for enrollment options students but rather the amounts that public postsecondary systems estimated and requested for these students at the beginning point of budget discussions. Second, the formula assumes that the costs of enrollment options students are "marginal" rather than average, due to the assumption that secondary students participate on a "space available" basis, but we found:

- **Although statutes say that postsecondary students should take priority over Postsecondary Enrollment Options students, there is little evidence that the students have a "marginal" cost impact.**[18]

Fifty-seven percent of the postsecondary administrators in our survey said they placed no limits on the number of enrollment options students that they admit, and 45 percent said they allowed the secondary students to register at the same time or before regularly admitted postsecondary students. Third, the statutory formula rests on enrollment figures that are two years old. Since the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program has been growing, this would have caused an underestimation of costs. And fourth, the formula would have included secondary students whose postsecondary classes were paid under contracts with individual school districts, as well as those for whom the former Department of Education paid flat rates.[19] Although these students are legitimately part of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, we were not able to obtain any other summary information on contracted arrangements by secondary schools. Thus, had we included contract activity as part of our postsecondary cost estimate without corresponding information from the secondary side, we would have overestimated postsecondary enrollments relative to secondary enrollments.

In making our estimate of additional public postsecondary costs due to the program, we assumed that Postsecondary Enrollment Options students influenced a proportionate share of postsecondary instructional expenditures in the same manner as similar, regularly enrolled students. For each public higher education system, we estimated the average cost of educating a Postsecondary Enrollment Options student and multiplied this cost by the full-year equivalent number of

18 Minn. Stat. §123.3514, Subd. 4d.

19 See memorandum from Assistant Attorney General Bernard E. Johnson to Glenn C. Wood, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, July 20, 1995, clarifying that a postsecondary institution cannot, for funding purposes, report secondary students as regular students if its funding is from an agreement with a school board, and it is not entitled to receive 67 percent state funding for these students.

program participants in each system.[20] We then subtracted adjusted payments from the former Department of Education from the total instructional costs to yield the component of the secondary students' instructional costs that had to be financed by appropriations or other revenue.[21] The amounts paid to postsecondary institutions by college and academic term came directly from the Department of Children, Families and Learning; the Higher Education Services Office and budget officers from the postsecondary systems told us the amount of required fees; and we estimated book costs by adjusting the results of a 1989-90 study by the former Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board.[22]

The resulting estimate of additional public postsecondary costs due to the enrollment options program was about $5.6 million in 1993-94, as shown in Table 3.12. This estimate included the cost of the program to postsecondary schools, less the portion of those costs that were reimbursed by payments from the former Department of Education, reflecting the public postsecondary costs that were not covered by these payments.

UNBUDGETED FISCAL IMPACT

Besides the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program's effect on state and local expenditures, it is important to recognize several of its other costs and monetary benefits. We estimated these costs and benefits using state government records along with some survey data that we collected from program participants, their parents, and school administrators specifically for this purpose.[23]

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20 For community and technical colleges, total instructional costs for 1993-94 were divided by total full year-equivalent enrollments to yield an average instructional cost per full year-equivalent student, as reported in summary data tables by the Department of Finance dated February 27, 1995. But for state universities and the University of Minnesota, this method would yield average costs too high because they would have included higher-cost upper division and graduate programs while secondary students typically enroll in less expensive lower division courses. For the state universities, the figures reported to the Department of Finance were proportionally adjusted based on lower division costs and enrollments as shown in the state universities' fiscal year 1993 instructional cost study. The University of Minnesota's fiscal year 1994 instructional cost study was used to determine average instructional costs per college of the Twin Cities campus and campus-wide averages elsewhere.

21 We adjusted the department's payments to deduct the estimated costs of fees and books since they are not a component of regular postsecondary instructional costs.

22 Technical college fees were obtained from the *Higher Education Coordinating Board, Minnesota Post-Secondary Education: A Guide for Counselors* (September 1993). System budget officers provided fee data for state universities, community colleges, and the University of Minnesota. However, the University of Minnesota's Duluth and Twin Cities campuses do not charge student services fees for Postsecondary Enrollment Options students because they register through the Continuing Education and Extension program. Book price estimates were based on data in a research paper by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, *Use of a Regional Subsample of NPSAS90 to Establish a Benchmark for the Minnesota State Grant Program*, presented at the NASSGP/NCHELP Research Network Conference, May 19-21, 1993, after adjusting for inflation using the CPI-U-X1.

23 Since the program was designed to be "bare bones" in its administration and does not require counseling or student services, we did not estimate such costs.

Induced Enrollment Estimate

In visiting with school administrators, we learned that the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program may have inspired some students and their families to move to Minnesota and others to leave private or home schools in order to become eligible for state-paid postsecondary education. As discussed in Chapter 2, 5 percent of the parents in our survey said that their children had not been enrolled in a Minnesota public school during their sophomore year.

If 5 percent of the 1993-94 program participants transferred to Minnesota public schools and took postsecondary classes full time solely to take advantage of the program, the estimated cost to the state for the postsecondary education would have been about $1.7 million. However, we thought that it was more reasonable to estimate conservatively that only one-half of the previously ineligible students enrolled in public schools because of the program and that they, on the average, attended only part-time. In this case, the costs for the state would have been about $705,000.[24] As shown by Table 3.12, the added cost to school districts would have amounted to approximately $308,874 and to postsecondary schools approximately $395,646.

Postsecondary Education Support Cost Estimate

The Postsecondary Enrollment Options program subsidizes transportation to postsecondary schools only for a small number of low-income students, as we previously discussed. Other students must pay for their own transportation. In addition, program participants may incur expenses for travel between home and campus residences and for child care, if applicable. We estimated such costs based on a study by the former Higher Education Coordinating Board, which showed that regularly enrolled students' median annual postsecondary education support expenditures were about $424 in 1989-90. After adjusting for inflation, we multiplied this amount by the number of full-year equivalent enrollment options students. The resulting estimate of education support expenses for program participants and their families was about $1.3 million in 1993-94.

Tuition, Fees, and Books Cost Estimate

In our surveys, most of the program participants and their parents indicated that they were strongly motivated to use the enrollment options program to save on postsecondary costs and to earn college credits. Using published 1993-94 tuition and fee rates at Minnesota colleges and universities, along with previously collected information on the cost of books, we estimated the amount that secondary students and their families would have had to pay for postsecondary courses if

24 The estimated cost of part-time postsecondary enrollment is not just half of the full-time estimate because of differences in the amount of general education aid that school districts receive for full-time versus part-time program participants. We preferred the more conservative estimate because there are probably several reasons why some of the previously ineligible students enrolled in public schools in 11th grade, while we did not know the general level of new grade 11 enrollments.

they took the same courses and the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program did not exist.[25] In fact, 25 of the 76 postsecondary administrators in our survey reported that some secondary students already paid for classes themselves because they (a) were special cases, (b) were not eligible for the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, or (c) needed remedial classes that were not covered by the program.

In the absence of the program we estimated that if the same students had taken the same courses, out-of-pocket postsecondary education costs would have amounted to $10.9 million in 1993-94. This represents an average of about $3,665 per full-year equivalent student, although the amount varied greatly by type of postsecondary institution, as shown in Table 3.13. For example, if a secondary student attended a technical college full-time, tuition, fees, and books would have averaged $2,233 in 1993-94. At the opposite extreme, if the same student attended a private college full-time, the average out-of-pocket expense would have been $11,800.

Table 3.13: Estimated Value of Tuition, Fees, and Books to Program Participants and Parents by Type of Postsecondary School, 1993-94

	Technical College	Community College	State University	University of Minnesota System	Private College	Private Vocational School
Per full-year equivalent student	$2,233	$2,388	$2,882	$3,930	$11,800	$2,950
Per type of postsecondary school	$1,063,315	$3,486,613	$612,904	$1,978,356	$3,745,424	$19,539
Percent of full-year equivalent program participants	16%	49%	7%	17%	11%	< 1%

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor, Department of Children, Families and Learning, and Minnesota Higher Education Services Office.

Consequently, we found that the largest financial benefit to students and parents would accrue to those attending private colleges through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. We also found that:

- **Students with family incomes of $45,000 or more would have received most of the financial relief from postsecondary costs that they would have incurred if they enrolled in the same postsecondary classes and paid standard rates.**

As we showed in Chapter 2, this is a result of the higher-income students' proclivity to attend four-year colleges, particularly private colleges.

An alternative way to view these financial benefits would be to estimate how some students might gain future financial benefits from the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. However, such an estimate would depend on a number of

25 Tuition rates for community colleges, technical colleges, state universities and private four-year and vocational institutions were obtained from the Higher Education Coordinating Board, *A Guide for Counselors* (September 1993). Campus-specific tuition rates for the University of Minnesota were obtained from the counselor's guide and *The Record*, a publication of the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (August 1993).

We could not estimate the future financial benefit of the program to students or the state.

factors whose effects we could not estimate, including the frequency with which the program participants later enrolled in postsecondary degree programs, whether they chose the same or different postsecondary schools, whether the chosen postsecondary schools gave credit for the classes taken earlier, whether the credits taken in high school were relevant to the students' postsecondary program of study, how long students took to complete their postsecondary education, and the future cost of postsecondary education. In this view, if program participants actually reduced the amount of time and number of credits they needed to complete a degree because of the enrollment options program, there would be real future savings. But if students took about the same amount of time and expense to complete their postsecondary education as they would have without the program, the "savings" would be illusory. In our opinion, a separate, longitudinal study would be needed to estimate such future-oriented savings due to the program, following former participants through two to five years of college to determine if they completed their postsecondary education in less time and with less expense than a comparable control group of students who did not participate in the program.

Again, in this future-oriented view, if secondary students successfully transferred postsecondary credits earned through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program--as 68 percent of the former high school seniors who attempted this said in our survey that they have done--the state as well as students and parents might also receive future financial benefits, particularly in terms of money that would otherwise be spent on financial aid. Our 1994 evaluation of the State Grant program found that it was not specifically targeted at low-income students, but rather at students with total family income above the statewide median.[26] Thus, many of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program participants might be eligible for state grants after high school graduation.

Transportation Aid Savings Estimate

We also estimated the amount of transportation aid that the state did not have to pay in 1993-94 because some enrollment options students attended postsecondary classes full-time. This estimate was developed in cooperation with the Department of Children, Families and Learning, which determines eligibility for transportation funding. First, we determined that there were 1,012 full-time enrollment options students who lived far enough from secondary schools to otherwise be eligible to ride school buses. We then multiplied this figure by $300, which was the average per-student amount of state transportation aid per student. The resulting estimate of transportation savings to the state was $303,623, as shown in Table 3.12.

SUMMARY

Overall, most students, parents, postsecondary school administrators, and directors of alternative secondary schools were satisfied and had few problems with the

26 Office of the Legislative Auditor, *Higher Education Tuition and State Grants* (St. Paul, February 1994).

Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. However, high school administrators in our survey reported numerous negative educational, administrative, and financial effects. Yet, despite high school administrators' problems and concerns about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, we found no evidence that their opinions affected the rate of program participation.

We found that the program cost about $4.5 million as it increased the state's postsecondary education expenditures by $16.3 million and decreased K-12 education expenditures by $11.8 million. On the other hand, we also found that the monetary benefit to program participants and their parents was substantial. Had they been required to pay for the postsecondary classes they took through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1993-94, the standard rate for postsecondary tuition, fees, and books would have been about $10.9 million.

Secondary Schools Survey

APPENDIX A

On October 18, 1995, we sent questionnaires and cover letters to all 480 public high school principals and directors of alternative schools in Minnesota. We sent a reminder letter on November 1 and stopped accepting responses for processing on November 30. Of the 480 surveys mailed, 401 were completed by the deadline, resulting in a school-level response rate of 85 percent. The high schools surveyed represented 331 separate school districts. Of those 331 districts, 301 districts were represented among the respondents, resulting in a district-level response rate of 91 percent.

Most of the respondents (82 percent of the total) were from traditional high schools. A total of 74 alternative secondary school officials responded, representing area learning centers, charter schools, and special programs for students who have dropped out of or had difficulties in traditional high schools.

To assess whether these respondents were representative of the population of school districts, we compared characteristics of the respondents with those of all Minnesota school districts that have at least one high school. As shown in Table A.1, the respondents closely resemble the state's high school districts as a whole.

The questionnaire was addressed only to high school principals and alternative secondary school directors, and generally those officials were the ones to complete it. However, in some cases, counselors or teachers responded instead. Results are shown on the following questionnaire. Respondents' written comments are described on detail pages following the questionnaire.

Table A.1: Comparison Between High School Districts Statewide and Those Represented in Survey

	All High School Districts	Secondary Survey Respondents
Region		
North (#1, 2, 3, and 5)	28%	25%
Central (#4, 6, and 7)	36	38
South (#8, 9, and 10)	22	22
Minneapolis and St. Paul	1	1
Twin Cities suburbs	14	14
Total 11th- and 12th-Grade Enrollment		
Less than 106	31%	28%
106 to 230	34	36
More than 230	35	36
Operating Expenditures Per Pupil Unit		
Less than $4,260	32%	34%
$4,260 - 4,624	32	31
More than $4,624	32	32
Missing	4	4
Distance from the Nearest City with Postsecondary School		
Same city	14%	15%
Within 10 miles	15	15
10.1 to 20 miles	38	38
20.1 to 40 miles	30	30
40.1 or more miles	3	2
Projected Increase in Total Enrollment, 1994-95 to 1998-99		
Less than 0.155%	32%	33%
0.155% to 2.88%	32	32
More than 2.88%	32	32
Missing	5	4
AFDC Students		
Less than 4%	44%	45%
4% to 6%	12	12
More than 6%	40	40
Missing	5	4
District-Level Program Participation Rate		
Less than 2%	32%	32%
2% to 4.9%	35	35
More than 4.9%	34	33

Note: Geographic region is based on the location of Educational Cooperative Service Units (ECSUs). Projections of increased enrollment were made by the Department of Children, Families and Learning. Geographic distances were measured from city center to city center of each school's respective city.

OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

Questionnaire On the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program

October 1995

Responses received from secondary schools, October 24 through November 29, 1995.
Unless otherwise stated, percentages are based on 401 secondary schools.

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

General Instructions: Please complete this questionnaire on the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program for your school, regardless of the number of students from your school that have participated in the program. If precise figures are not readily available for some questions, please estimate as well as you can. While you may need assistance in obtaining some numerical figures, responses to other items should be based on your overall professional opinion.

When finished, please sign the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope ***by October 31***. Also, please enclose the following materials for the 1994-95 and 1995-96 school years along with your completed questionnaire:

1. **Course catalog and registration materials for your school.**
2. **Printed information used by your school for parents and students interested in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.**
3. **Copy of form(s) relating to the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program to be signed by your school, parents, students, and postsecondary schools.**
4. **Student-parent handbook.**

If you have any questions, please contact Jo Vos, Office of the Legislative Auditor, at (612) 296-1233.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Position: _____ Telephone: _____

I. First, we need some basic information about your school's advanced course offerings during the 1994-95 school year.

1a. During the 1994-95 school year, did your school teach any College Board Advanced Placement (AP) courses on site?

Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
249	62%	No	147	37%	Yes	5	1%	No Response

1b. If yes, please indicate the number of different courses taught and the total number of students who enrolled in them. If a student enrolled in more than one Advanced Placement course, count that student only once.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
a. Number of courses	1	20	3	2
b. Student enrollment	2	600	74	38

2a. During the 1994-95 school year, did your staff teach any courses in your school under an agreement with one or more postsecondary schools for which students could earn college credit?

Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
269	67%	No	130	32%	Yes	2	<1%	No Response

2b. If yes, please indicate the number of different courses taught and the total number of students who enrolled in them. If a student enrolled in more than one course, count that student only once.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
a. Number of courses	1	45	4	2
b. Student enrollment	1	300	47	35

3a. During the 1994-95 school year, did your staff teach any other special programs or courses in your school for which students could earn college credit?

Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
361	90%	No	36	9%	Yes	4	1%	No Response

3b. If yes, please indicate the type of program, the number of different courses taught, and the total number of students who enrolled in them. If a student enrolled in more than one course, count that student only once.

Type of program	Number of courses				Student enrollment			
	Min.	Max.	Mean	Med.	Min.	Max.	Mean	Med.
See detail pages.	1	38	6	3	4	700	172	41
	1	12	5	1	8	34	23	28

4. Since the 1994-95 school year, have you increased or decreased the number of courses taught in your school where students can earn college credit?

Number	Percent	
78	19%	Increased the number of courses where students could earn college credit.
13	3	Decreased the number of courses where students could earn college credit.
291	73	Neither increased nor decreased the number of courses where students could earn college credit.
4	1	Don't know.
15	4	No Response

5. Which, if any, of the following sequences of high school courses did your staff teach on site during the 1994-95 school year?

		No, not taught on site		Yes, taught on site		Don't know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Enriched or accelerated math, including calculus.	125	31%	256	64%	1	<1%	19	5%
b.	Three or more years of college preparatory courses.	133	33	234	58	10	2	24	6
c.	Enriched or accelerated biology, chemistry, *and* physics.	195	49	180	45	0	0	26	6
d.	Three or more years of enriched or accelerated social studies courses.	275	69	95	24	3	7	28	7
e.	Advanced technical courses that provide specific job training in at least one specialty area.	220	55	147	37	5	1	29	7
f.	Three or more years of at least one world language.	117	29	270	67	0	0	14	3

6. During the 1994-95 school year, what was your total junior and senior enrollment, including students enrolled in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program?

Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1	1,739	285	169

7a. How many seniors graduated from your school in 1994-95?

Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1	858	116	68

7b. Of these, how many planned to go on to a:

		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
a.	Four-year college or university	0	396	56	28
b.	Two-year community college	0	191	21	10
c.	Technical college or vocational school	0	96	19	15

II. Next, we'd like to ask you some questions about student participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year.

8. Did any students from your school use the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program to take courses at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year?

Number	Percent	
41	10%	No *(If no, complete question 8a.)*
360	90	Yes *(If yes, go to question 9.)* →

8a. ***(Complete only if no students from your school participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year.)*** **How important do you think the following reasons are in helping to explain why no students from your school participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year?**

		Very Unimportant Reason		Unimportant Reason		Neither Important nor Unimportant Reason		Important Reason		Very Important Reason		Don't Know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	There were no postsecondary schools within a reasonable distance.	13	32%	6	15%	8	19%	6	15%	5	12%	1	2%	2	5%
b.	There were no postsecondary schools within a reasonable distance that students wanted to attend.	12	29	8	19	9	22	6	15	1	2	1	2	4	10
c.	Our school offered advanced placement or other courses where students could earn college credit on-site.	12	29	8	19	9	22	4	10	3	7	1	2	4	10
d.	Our school offered a wide enough variety of courses to satisfy students' needs.	6	15	0	0	7	17	15	37	8	19	2	5	3	7
e.	No students expressed an interest in using the program.	3	7	0	0	4	10	11	27	18	44	1	2	4	10

		Very Unimportant Reason		Unimportant Reason		Neither Important nor Unimportant Reason		Important Reason		Very Important Reason		Don't Know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
f.	Students who used the program in the past did not recommend the program to others.	12	29%	3	7%	10	24%	6	15%	1	2%	4	10%	5	12%
g.	Other *(please specify)*_____	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	12	1	2	34	83
h.	See detail pages.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	0	0	38	93

[For schools with no participants]: Now skip to question 14 on page 6.

9. During the 1994-95 school year, how many Postsecondary Enrollment Options students from your school:

		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
a.	Took at least one course at a postsecondary school.	1	181	18	7
b.	Attended your school parttime.	0	164	13	4
c.	Attended a postsecondary school fulltime.	0	63	6	3
d.	Attended a postsecondary school fulltime throughout both their junior and senior years.	0	40	1	0
e.	Completed and received high school credit for all postsecondary courses taken.	0	179	15	6
f.	Completed but did not receive high school credit for all postsecondary courses taken.	0	41	1	0
g.	Enrolled in but did not complete one or more postsecondary courses or receive high school credit for them.	0	34	3	1
h.	Fell behind in the number of credits necessary to graduate from high school because they failed or did not complete a postsecondary course.	0	20	1	0
i.	Failed to graduate from high school on schedule because they failed or did not complete a postsecondary course.	0	11	1	0

10. In general, did most of the students who took courses at postsecondary institutions during the 1994-95 school year take them to satisfy minimum high school graduation requirements or to earn additional credits beyond the minimum requirements?

Number	Percent	
161	45%	To satisfy minimum high school graduation requirements.
164	46	To earn additional credits beyond the minimum.
23	6	Both.
9	2	Don't know.
3	1	No response.

11a. In determining GPAs during the 1994-95 school year, did your school weight courses that students took at postsecondary schools any differently than courses taken at your school?

Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
332	92%	No	26	7%	Yes

11b. If yes, please indicate how courses taken at postsecondary schools were weighted.

See detail pages.

12. To the best of your knowledge, about how many of the students from your school who used the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year displayed the following characteristics?

		Few or none		About one-fourth		About one-half		About three-fourths		All or nearly all		Don't know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Top third in class ranking.	74	21%	48	13%	58	16%	53	15%	108	30%	15	4%	6	2%
b.	Bottom third in class ranking.	211	59	53	15	19	5	5	1	19	5	23	6	30	8
c.	Very mature.	45	12	43	12	92	26	76	21	74	21	20	6	10	3
d.	Loners.	134	37	66	18	48	13	19	5	28	8	48	13	17	5
e.	Self-motivated.	35	10	34	9	84	23	74	21	103	29	22	6	8	2
f.	Bored.	132	37	69	19	40	11	17	5	14	4	69	19	19	5
g.	Gifted/talented.	172	48	74	21	29	8	19	5	21	6	35	10	10	3
h.	Social/behavior problems.	219	61	59	16	26	7	8	2	14	4	20	6	14	4
i.	From middle or higher income families.	82	23	42	11	77	21	35	10	36	10	75	21	13	4
j.	Had at least one parent with a college degree.	74	21	53	15	40	11	17	5	27	7	136	38	13	4
k.	Family problems.	105	29	50	14	36	10	20	6	27	7	107	30	15	4
l.	Other (please specify)_____	2	1	2	1	3	1	5	1	9	2	1	<1	338	94
m.	See detail pages.	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	<1	354	98

13. Students use the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program for a variety of reasons. Please indicate how important you think the following reasons were to students from your school who took courses at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year.

		Very Unimportant Reason		Unimportant Reason		Neither Important nor Unimportant Reason		Important Reason		Very Important Reason		Don't Know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Courses were not available in our school.	70	19%	84	23%	55	15%	102	28%	39	11%	4	1%	6	2%
b.	Courses were more challenging than those in our school.	69	19	87	24	85	24	79	22	23	6	12	3	5	1
c.	Courses were less challenging than those in our school.	98	27	93	26	100	28	25	7	4	1	26	7	14	4
d.	To be with friends.	104	29	102	28	69	19	46	13	11	3	16	4	12	3
e.	To get a head start on college credits.	13	4	12	3	22	6	133	37	171	47	6	2	3	1

		Very Unimportant Reason		Unimportant Reason		Neither Important nor Unimportant Reason		Important Reason		Very Important Reason		Don't Know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
f.	To help decide whether or where to go to college after high school.	73	20%	72	20%	104	29%	69	19%	16	4%	18	5%	8	2%
g.	To help get into a certain college after graduation.	97	27	109	30	98	27	33	10	5	1	11	3	7	2
h.	To be in a less restrictive learning environment.	31	9	35	10	68	19	155	43	52	14	10	3	9	2
i.	To save on postsecondary costs.	9	2	7	2	18	5	103	29	215	60	3	1	5	1
j.	To please parents.	34	9	39	11	113	31	101	28	18	5	44	12	11	3
k.	To be with more mature classmates.	51	14	82	23	113	31	76	21	11	3	17	5	10	3
l.	To improve students' social or emotional life.	42	12	77	21	115	32	62	17	18	5	37	10	9	2
m.	To avoid taking particular courses or teachers.	61	17	92	26	97	27	61	17	19	5	21	6	9	2
n.	The postsecondary school was conveniently located.	21	6	29	8	52	14	176	49	70	19	7	2	5	1
o.	Other *(please specify)*_____	1	4	0	0	0	0	10	3	18	5	0	0	331	92
p.	See detail pages.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	358	99
q.	_____	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	358	99

14. Please indicate the extent to which you think the following reasons are generally good or bad reasons for students to consider using the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program to take courses at postsecondary schools.

		Very Bad Reason		Bad Reason		Neither Good nor Bad Reason		Good Reason		Very Good Reason		Don't Know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Courses are not available in their secondary school.	3	1%	8	2%	12	3%	153	38%	216	54%	2	<1%	7	2%
b.	Courses are more challenging than those in their secondary school.	5	1	18	4	42	10	155	39	165	41	9	2	7	2
c.	Courses are less challenging than those in their secondary school.	187	47	135	34	49	12	6	1	5	1	11	3	8	2
d.	To be with friends.	158	39	144	36	77	19	6	1	0	0	7	2	9	2
e.	To get a head start on college credits.	20	5	39	10	65	16	164	41	105	26	1	<1	7	2
f.	To help decide whether or where to go to college after high school.	23	6	59	15	122	30	139	35	47	12	4	1	7	2
g.	To help get into a certain college after graduation.	27	7	50	12	147	37	127	32	35	9	10	2	5	1

		Very Bad Reason		Bad Reason		Neither Good nor Bad Reason		Good Reason		Very Good Reason		Don't Know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
h.	To be in a less restrictive learning environment.	36	9%	70	17%	139	35%	126	31%	20	5%	2	<1%	8	2%
i.	To save on postsecondary costs.	40	10	52	13	39	10	151	38	110	27	2	<1	7	2
j.	To please parents.	84	21	143	36	114	28	34	8	8	2	9	2	9	2
k.	To be with more mature classmates.	29	7	51	13	161	40	130	32	14	3	8	2	8	2
l.	To improve students' social or emotional life.	40	10	85	21	144	36	100	25	12	3	12	3	8	2
m.	To avoid taking particular courses or teachers.	124	31	180	45	61	15	17	4	2	<1	8	2	9	2
n.	A postsecondary school is conveniently located.	37	9	47	12	132	33	125	31	45	11	4	1	11	3
o.	Other *(please specify)*_____	3	1	0	0	2	<1	0	0	7	2	0	0	389	97
p.	See detail pages.	0	0	0	0	1	<1	0	0	2	<1	0	0	398	99
q.	See detail pages.	2	<1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	<1	0	0	398	99

III. This section asks how parents and students learn about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program and how you work with participating postsecondary schools.

15. Which of the following methods did your school use to inform students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program for the 1994-95 school year?

		No, did not use this method		Yes, used this method		Don't know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	The program was described in our parent-student handbook.	208	52%	167	42%	9	2%	17	4%
b.	The program was described in our course registration materials.	167	42	209	52	9	2	16	4
c.	Special written materials about the program were displayed for students to take.	166	41	209	52	9	2	17	4
d.	Special written materials about the program were sent to all parents.	287	72	79	20	16	4	19	5
e.	Special written materials about the program were sent to those parents who asked.	91	23	284	71	9	2	17	4
f.	Special written materials were given to all students.	268	67	108	27	9	2	16	4
g.	Special written materials were given to those students who asked.	46	11	338	84	4	1	13	3
h.	Special meetings were held to inform all students of the program.	245	61	130	32	5	1	21	5
i.	The program was mentioned in meetings for college-bound students.	142	35	229	57	15	4	15	4

		No, did not use this method		Yes, used this method		Don't know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
j.	High school counselors suggested the program to students individually.	68	17%	303	76%	19	5%	11	3%
k.	Teachers suggested the program to students individually.	96	24	187	47	105	26	13	3
l.	Postsecondary staff came to the high school to meet with students.	263	66	109	27	18	4	11	3
m.	Postsecondary schools sent written information that we shared with individual students.	156	39	195	49	38	9	12	3
n.	The program was mentioned over our public announcement system.	302	75	68	17	13	3	18	4
o.	The program was described in our parent newsletter.	214	53	148	37	23	6	16	4
p.	Posters about the program were displayed in our school.	292	73	71	18	21	5	17	4
q.	Press releases about the program were sent to the local news media.	268	67	92	23	21	5	20	5
r.	Other *(please specify)*._____	1	<1	43	11	0	0	357	89
s.	_____	0	0	9	2	1	<1	391	97
t.	_____	0	0	1	<1	0	0	400	100

16a. Since the 1994-95 school year, have you changed or are you planning to change the way(s) in which you notify students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program?

Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
347	87%	No	44	11%	Yes	10	2%	No Response

16b. If yes, in what way(s) have you changed or are planning to change your notification procedures?

17. Please indicate, to the best of your knowledge, whether the following persons were generally involved in helping students at your school decide whether to take courses at postsecondary schools during the 1994-95 school year.

		No, not involved		Yes, involved		Don't know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Secondary teachers	109	27%	211	53%	72	18%	9	2%
b.	Secondary counselors	16	4	372	93	4	1	9	2
c.	Secondary administrators	72	18	292	73	24	6	13	3
d.	Postsecondary instructors	196	49	65	16	119	30	21	5
e.	Postsecondary counselors	116	29	189	47	79	20	17	4
e.	Parents/family	12	3	340	85	36	9	13	3
f.	Friends	38	9	234	58	110	27	19	5
g.	Other *(please specify)*_____	0	0	6	1	8	<1	394	98
h.	See detail pages.	0	0	0	0	1	<1	400	100
i.	_____	0	0	0	0	1	<1	400	100

18. Now, please indicate whether you think the level of involvement of the following persons during the 1994-95 school year was too much, about right, or not enough.

		Not involved at all		Not involved enough		Involved about right		Involved too much		Don't know		No response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Secondary teachers	46	11%	56	14%	222	55%	2	<1%	63	16%	12	3%
b.	Secondary counselors	5	1	21	5	350	87	8	1	12	3	7	2
c.	Secondary administrators	21	5	29	7	313	78	4	1	22	5	12	3
d.	Postsecondary instructors	68	17	44	11	125	31	10	2	139	35	15	4
e.	Postsecondary counselors	42	10	42	10	196	49	10	2	100	25	12	3
e.	Parents/family	4	1	50	12	241	60	14	3	80	20	12	3
f.	Friends	13	3	8	2	145	36	70	17	144	36	21	5
g.	Other *(please specify)*_____	0	0	1	<1	3	1	1	<1	1	<1	395	98
h.	See detail pages.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	401	100

19. Which of the following services, if any, did your school provide to students who were interested or enrolled in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year?

		No, not provided		Yes, provided		Don't know		No response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Specific person responsible for handling inquiries about the program.	35	9%	358	89%	2	<1%	6	1%
b.	General counseling on request for all students interested in participating.	9	2	385	96	2	<1	5	1
c.	Required counseling provided before students could enroll in courses elsewhere.	96	24	277	69	16	4	10	2
d.	Special efforts made to help students who took courses elsewhere continue to participate in school activities.	75	19	287	72	25	6	14	3
e.	Routine, on-going contact with postsecondary staff where students took courses.	207	52	148	37	36	9	10	2
f.	Contact on a case-by-case basis with postsecondary staff for students experiencing difficulty.	146	36	214	53	29	7	12	3
g.	Routine, on-going contact with parents of students who participated in the program.	220	55	140	35	31	8	10	3
h.	Contact on a case-by-case basis with parents of selected students experiencing difficulty.	110	27	250	62	24	6	17	4
i.	Other *(please specify)*_____	0	0	8	2	0	0	393	98
j.	See detail pages.	0	0	2	<1	0	0	399	99
k.	_____	0	0	1	<1	0	0	400	100

IV. This final section focuses on the impact the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program has had on your school since the program began in the 1985-86 school year.

20. First, please indicate whether and how the following aspects of your school's program have been affected by the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Then, please indicate whether this has been a problem for your school.

		Type of Effect										Of those affected: Was Change a Problem?					
		None		Decrease		Increase		Don't Know		No Response		No		Yes		No Response	
		N.	Pct	N.	Pct	N.	Pct	N.	Pct	N.	Pct	N.	Pct	N.	Pct	N.	Pct
a.	Number of courses taught in your school.	277	69%	30	7%	66	16%	15	4%	13	3%	58	60%	23	24%	15	16%
b.	Quality of courses taught in your school.	266	66	12	3	80	20	30	7	13	3	57	62	17	18	18	20
c.	Cooperative efforts with post-secondary institutions.	148	37	4	1	207	52	25	6	17	4	154	73	17	8	40	19
d.	Communication with post-secondary institutions.	111	28	3	1	256	64	15	4	16	4	168	65	35	14	56	22
e.	Use of technology, such as interactive television.	272	68	10	2	80	20	27	7	12	3	58	64	13	14	19	21
f.	Planning and scheduling classes.	234	58	7	2	135	34	12	3	13	3	39	27	82	58	21	15
g.	Budgeting resources.	191	48	68	17	82	20	45	11	15	4	21	14	93	62	36	24
h.	Providing appropriate staffing levels.	283	71	28	7	49	12	24	6	17	4	14	18	47	61	16	21
i.	Student participation in your school's activities.	249	62	98	24	20	5	20	5	14	3	40	34	56	47	22	19
j.	Student/staff interaction.	241	60	65	16	43	11	33	8	19	5	47	44	38	33	25	23
k.	Parental involvement in children's education.	201	50	26	6	92	23	66	16	17	4	75	64	20	17	23	19
l.	Student morale.	237	59	25	6	62	15	62	15	15	4	48	55	17	20	22	25
m.	Staff morale.	230	57	78	19	30	7	45	11	20	5	25	24	54	51	27	25
n.	Providing interested and participating students with needed support services.	182	45	18	4	144	36	33	8	24	6	81	50	49	30	32	20
o.	Other *(specify)*_____	1	<1	2	<1	5	1	0	0	393	98	2	29	5	71	0	0
p.	See detail pages.	1	<1	0	0	0	0	0	0	400	100	0	0	0	0	1	<1
q.	_____	1	<1	0	0	0	0	0	0	400	100	0	0	0	0	1	<1

21. In your opinion, do any of the following aspects of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program need improvement, insofar as the program allows students to take courses at postsecondary schools?

		Need for Improvement													
		None		Little		Some		Much		Critical		Don't Know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Information provided by your school.	152	38%	92	23%	118	29%	18	4%	1	<1%	9	2%	11	3%
b.	Information provided by post-secondary institutions.	111	28	55	14	133	23	63	16	22	5	8	2	9	2
c.	Information provided by the Department of Children, Families and Learning (formerly the Department of Education).	126	31	40	10	134	33	45	11	23	6	22	5	11	3
d.	Communication between your school and postsecondary institutions.	97	24	76	19	131	33	59	15	28	7	1	<1	9	2
e.	Counseling by your school.	155	39	107	27	99	25	22	5	5	1	4	1	9	2
f.	Counseling by postsecondary institutions.	81	20	56	14	113	28	70	17	32	8	39	10	10	2
g.	Timing of student notification to your school about enrolling in postsecondary courses.	121	30	68	17	86	21	69	17	39	10	7	2	11	3
h.	Procedures to collect books and materials at the end of the course.	71	18	46	11	83	21	108	26	54	13	31	8	10	2
i.	Rules or procedures for credit transfer.	119	30	72	18	96	24	51	13	36	9	17	4	10	2
j.	Nature of postsecondary courses students choose to take.	79	20	60	15	99	25	85	21	52	13	15	4	11	3
k.	Information from postsecondary schools about student progress in postsecondary courses.	54	14	44	11	104	26	105	26	77	19	7	2	10	2
l.	Amount of financial aid districts receive for students who participate.	52	13	23	6	81	20	93	23	93	23	50	12	9	2
m.	Transportation.	193	48	49	12	54	13	33	8	28	7	26	6	18	4
o.	Other *(please specify)*_____	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	<1	5	1	1	<1	393	98
p.	See detail pages.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	401	100
q.	_____														

22. Please indicate whether you generally agree or disagree with the following statements about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Don't Know		No Response	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	The program has generally promoted rigorous academic pursuits.	51	13%	124	31%	98	24%	99	25%	17	4%	4	1%	8	2%
b.	The program has generally provided a wider variety of options to students.	7	2	26	6	33	8	261	65	64	16	1	<1	9	2
c.	The time and costs of implementing and running the program have outweighed its benefits.	31	8	93	23	100	25	85	21	49	12	32	8	11	3
d.	Students generally have gained from their participation.	9	2	44	11	85	21	186	46	54	13	13	3	10	2
e.	The program has had an overall negative impact on secondary schools.	36	9	122	30	99	25	82	20	39	10	14	3	9	2
f.	The program is readily available to interested students.	7	2	41	10	28	7	241	60	73	18	2	<1	9	2
g.	Staff have consistently encouraged appropriate students to participate.	17	4	85	21	118	29	115	29	16	4	42	10	8	2
h.	It is too early to judge the program's overall effect on students.	51	13	160	40	105	26	43	11	6	1	28	7	8	2
i.	Parents and students need to be more aware of the risks associated with the program.	1	<1	27	7	62	15	190	47	108	27	5	1	8	2
j.	Secondary schools should have more control over students' use of the program.	10	2	53	13	78	19	142	35	99	25	11	3	8	2
k.	The program is generally performing in a satisfactory manner.	34	8	83	21	78	19	152	38	31	8	14	3	9	2
l.	Other *(please specify)*_____														
m.	See detail pages														

23. In your opinion, what are the major strengths of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program?

Number	Percent	
73	18%	No comments.
328	82	Comments - Categorized in detail pages.

24. In your opinion, what are the major weaknesses of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program?

Number	Percent	
66	16%	No comments.
335	83	Comments - Categorized in detail pages.

Detail

Question 3b: Other special programs or courses offered in high school for which students could earn extra college credit

	Of those who mentioned other programs or courses: Number	Percent
Vocational/technical courses	23	66%
Advanced placement courses	5	14
International baccalaureate program	4	11
Advanced/honors courses	3	9

Question 11b: Ways in which courses taken at postsecondary courses were weighted

	Of those who weighted postsecondary courses: Number	Percent
Miscellaneous	12	48%
Extra grade point credit given for PSEO classes	8	32
Weighted like any other high school class	3	12
Weighted higher if equivalent high school course weighted higher	2	8

Question 12m: Other characteristics of students who use Postsecondary Enrollment Options

	Of those who mentioned other characteristics: Number	Percent
Unique student characteristics -- eg., adult students, teen-age parents, etc.	11	46%
Sought financial advantages	8	33
Wanted to avoid other difficulties in high school	3	13
Religious reasons	1	4
Miscellaneous	1	4

Question 13o: Other reasons for students to enroll in Postsecondary Enrollment Options

	Of those who mentioned other reasons: Number	Percent
Academic reasons	4	17%
Vocational reasons	7	29
Social reasons	5	21
Earn more credits	3	13
Miscellaneous	5	21

Question 14o: Other reasons why students consider using Postsecondary Enrollment Options program (mentioned once each)

Have a parking permit [and] leave school early or graduate early without going to high school last quarter
Lack of maturity
Disobey school rules
To avoid conflicts with peers
Better looking boys
Need to finish to stay off welfare
For our students - to start vocational career classes
To prove to themselves they could do it
To try out a particular career area

Question 15r: Other methods schools used to inform students and parents of Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1994-95

	Of those who mentioned other methods:	
	Number	Percent
Direct contact between high school staff, students and/or parents	12	30%
During registration	9	23
Word of mouth	7	18
Newsletter, press release	5	13
Miscellaneous	4	10
Classroom presentation	3	8

Question 16b: Changes made or planned by school in how parents and students are informed of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program

	Of those who made or plan changes:	
	Number	Percent
Describe program in registration materials, student/parent handbooks	19	41%
Meetings, phone calls with students/parents	9	20
Newsletters, press release	8	17
Handouts, posters	4	9
Letter to parents	3	7
Will do less because results are undesireable	2	4
Earlier notification	1	2

Question 17g: Other staff members at school involved in helping students decide whether students should take courses at post-secondary schools during 1994-95 school year (mentioned once each)

Gifted/talented coordinator
Area Learning Center staff
Previous participants
Social workers and probation officers
Area Learning Center Director

Question 18g: **Level of involvement of other persons in deciding whether students should take courses at post-secondary schools during 1994-95 school year and appropriateness of level of involvement (mentioned once each)**

Gifted/Talented coordinator -- involved about right
ALC staff -- involved about right
Arne Carlson (any uninformed non-educator) --involved too much
Probation officers and social workers -- not involved enough

Question 19i: **Other services school provided to students who were interested in or enrolled in Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during 1993-94 school year (mentioned once each)**

Constant contact with counselor at secondary school, struggling or not
Daily bulletins and senior memos always here and available
Parental conference required
Contact with probation officers and social workers
Testing to get in
Meet with parents prior to applying
Contact with [community college] counselor

Question 20o: **Other aspects of secondary school's program affected by Postsecondary Enrollment Options program (mentioned once each)**

Book fees/book returns
Transcript/graduation difficulties
Lack of enrollment for advanced classes
An inordinate amount of counselor time
Student leadership
We didn't change anything because of PSEO. Nearest community college is 86 miles and 4-year school 140 miles
Keep my students in high school
Increase in resources provided to students

Question 21o: **Other aspects of Postsecondary Enrollment Options program that need improvement insofar as the program allows students to take courses at postsecondary schools (mentioned once each)**

Class rank for these students does not work with our timelines
Greater control of student participation by high school
Calendars don't agree
Standards for student enrollment
Rigor at postsecondary
Appropriateness of postsecondary options for students not academically qualified
Handbook should describe
Availability of classes

Question 22l: Other statements about Postsecondary Enrollment Options program (mentioned once each)

PSEO is a financial aide package for multi-class formulas/families
College credit should not be given
Counselors should have been involved in the program's implementation
Its main function is a scholarship
The program is for credits, not academic pursuits
Robs their childhood. Kids have plenty of time in their life to work
Program should be for top 1/4 students only
Equity metro vs. outstate
More mature student
Abuses should be curtailed
PSEO program is used as a "way out"
Students may miss 2 years of education
Postsecondary schools don't monitor the students who they let in--they let anybody in
Why not eliminate all first two years of college?

Question 23: Categorization of major strengths of Postsecondary Enrollment Options program

	Number	Percent
Gives students more course options and more educational enrichment	3	38%
Allows advanced students to learn beyond high school curriculum and be further challenged academically	106	21
Allows students, parents and the state to save money spent on college	77	15
Allows students to earn college credit before graduating high school	50	10
Allows students to sample college and be exposed to its demands	36	7
Allows students who do not thrive in traditional high school to find suitable courses	29	6
Helps students form ideas of career goals earlier in life	10	2
Promotes higher learning standards in high school	5	1
Miscellaneous	7	1

Question 24: Categorization of major weaknesses of Postsecondary Enrollment Options program

	Number	Percent
Students admitted who are not prepared academically, emotionally or socially	129	23%
Program has administrative problems related to admissions, coordination, control, scheduling. counseling, collecting books, and other rules	122	22
Students use program to avoid high school challenges, such as structured day schedules, no-smoking rules, or to take postsecondary courses that are less rigorous than high school offerings	67	12
Places financial considerations of parents/students/institutions ahead of student needs, fairness to taxpayers	65	12

Question 24: **continued**

	Number	Percent
Harms financial status of high schools	47	8%
Deprives high schools of students who would be leaders or academically exceptional students	33	6
Access limited by geography, type of secondary school, and students' grade in school	31	5
Students enroll in courses offered at high school	24	4
Students deprived of high school extracurricular activities/social interaction/overall experience	23	4
Miscellaneous	10	2
Limited course offerings for high school students	8	1
Not enough opportunities for vocational or average-and-below students to participate	5	1

Survey of Postsecondary Campuses

APPENDIX B

On November 14, 1995, we sent questionnaires and cover letters to individuals believed to have the most experience with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program at each of the 87 campuses that are eligible to enroll secondary students through the program. Four of the campuses indicated that they contracted directly with school districts to enroll secondary students and so did not officially participate in the program through the Department of Children, Families, and Learning. Of the remaining 83 campuses with program participants, 76 returned completed questionnaires by December 14, resulting in a response rate of 92 percent.

As shown in Table B.1, all of the University of Minnesota, state university, and private vocational campuses responded. No more than three campuses from each of the other postsecondary education systems did not return completed questionnaires in time to be included. We did not send questionnaires to any for-profit private vocational campuses because they are ineligible by law.

Table B.1: Postsecondary Campuses Eligible to Participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program and Represented in Survey

	Number of Eligible Campuses	Number of Respondents
Technical Colleges	34	32
Community Colleges	21	18
University of Minnesota	4	4
State Universities	7	7
Private Colleges	16	14
Private Vocational Schools	5	5
	87	80

Note: Private vocational schools are eligible only if they are nonprofit and grant two-year associate degrees or are opportunities industrialization centers accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Private colleges are eligible if they provide on-campus housing and grant two- or four-year liberal arts degrees. Two such colleges have declined their eligibility. Four of the above technical colleges do not officially participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program.

Those who responded to the questionnaire included deans of student affairs, registrars, admissions directors, counselors, research directors, and other officials. In many cases, information management personnel helped by providing numerical figures. Results of the survey are shown on the following questionnaire. Respondents' written comments are listed or categorized on detail pages after the questionnaire.

OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
Questionnaire On the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program for Postsecondary Institutions

November 1995

Responses received November 15 - December 14, 1995. Unless otherwise stated, percentages are based on 76 campuses responding "yes" to the first question below.

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding or multiple answers to open-ended questions.

General Instructions: This questionnaire should be completed by the person with the most experience with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program as it allows secondary students to take classes on your campus with funding by the State Department of Children, Families, and Learning (formerly the State Department of Education). Did any secondary students take classes on **your campus** through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year?

No ↓ **N = 4 (technical colleges)** Yes **N = 76**

If you had **NO** secondary students **on campus** through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year, please answer the following questions only, sign below, and return this questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.

i. Did your campus enroll any secondary students in classes on your campus through some means other than the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1994-95?

- No
- 4 Yes *(Specify)* contracts (3); local district agreements (1)

ii. Did your campus provide classes at any secondary school for which students could earn postsecondary credit in 1994-95?

- 1 No
- 3 Yes, to 1, 3, or 7 schools for about 38, 130, or 198 students *(fill in numbers)*

iii. What was the main reason for the absence of secondary students on your campus through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1994-95? Please explain.

Financially better to contract, less paperwork, less cost to districts.

If you had **AT LEAST ONE** secondary student on **campus** through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during 1994-95, please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge, estimating if necessary. Then sign below and return the questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope *by November 27*, along with these materials for the 1994-95 and 1995-96 school years:

1. **Admission criteria for Postsecondary Enrollment Options students.**
2. **Criteria for students' continued participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program on your campus.**
3. **Printed information for parents and students, describing the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program on your campus.**
4. **Announcements of availability of courses on your campus sent to secondary schools.**
5. **Participation agreement forms, if any, between students and your campus.**

Continue .....

Signature: _____ Position: _____

Phone: _____ Phone: _____

If you have any questions, please contact Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, Office of the Legislative Auditor, at (612) 296-1228.

I. First, we need some basic information about student enrollment on your campus through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, excluding any courses you may offer at secondary schools.

1. Please indicate the total headcount and full-time equivalent of secondary students who were enrolled in at least one course on your campus through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year.

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	No Response
a. Headcount	90	41	1	1,168	4
b. Full-time equivalents	60	25	0.4	810	7

2. During the 1994-95 school year, what was the total headcount and full-time equivalent undergraduate enrollment on your campus, including students who took classes through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program?

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	No Response
a. Total headcount	3,773	2,144	98	24,406	4
b. Total full-time equivalents	2,213	1,661	80	11,353	8

3. During the 1994-95 school year, were your admissions criteria for secondary students to take classes on campus lower, about the same, or higher than for regularly admitted first-year postsecondary students?

Number	Percent	
0	0%	Admission standards were lower
35	46	Admission standards were about the same
41	54	Admission standards were higher

4. During the 1994-95 school year, were your standards for satisfactory academic progress for secondary students on campus lower, about the same, or higher than for regularly admitted first-year postsecondary students?

Number	Percent	
1	1%	Satisfactory progress standards were lower
69	91	Satisfactory progress standards were about the same
6	8	Satisfactory progress standards were higher

5. During the 1994-95 school year, did you decrease, maintain, or increase the credit load that secondary students could carry on your campus through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program?

Number	Percent	
5	7	Decreased the credit load
71	93	Maintained about the same credit load
0	0	Increased the credit load

6. Since the 1994-95 school year, have you increased or decreased the number of different courses available to secondary students on your campus?

Number	Percent	
8	11	Decreased the number of courses
61	80	No change in the number of courses
6	8	Increased the number of courses
1	1	No response

7. Since the 1994-95 school year, have you increased or decreased the number of secondary students who can enroll in courses on your campus through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program?

Number	Percent	
12	16%	Decreased the number who could enroll
18	24	Maintained about the same number
3	4	Increased the number who could enroll
43	57	We have no limit

8. Did your campus provide Postsecondary Enrollment Options classes at any secondary school in addition to students taking courses on campus during the 1994-95 school year?

Number	Percent		Number	Percent			Of those saying "yes": Mean	Median	Min.	Max.	No Response
60	79%	No	16	21%	Yes	a. If so, to how many schools?	7	3	1	41	1
						b. If so, for about how many students?	354	125	5	2,000	3

c. If so, are these classes taught by your staff or specially trained secondary teachers?

Number	Percent	
6	38%	Postsecondary staff
9	56	Secondary teachers
1	6	Both

9. Did any secondary students take classes on your campus through some means other than the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1994-95?

Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
39	51%	No	36	47%	Yes *(Specify)* see detail pages
1	1	No Response			

Of those who said "yes":	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.	No Response
a. About how many students?	126	10	2	1,800	2

10. Of the total number of secondary school seniors who took at least one course on your campus through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during 1994-95, approximately how many subsequently enrolled on your campus as postsecondary students in 1995-96?

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	No Response
a. Headcount of secondary school seniors enrolled on campus in 1994-95	65	25	1	863	11
b. Headcount of the former secondary school seniors enrolled as postsecondary students in 1995-96	23	10	0	380	14

11. During the 1994-95 school year, about how many secondary students using the Postecondary Enrollment Options program:

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	No Response
a. Applied to take classes on your campus.	110	60	1	1,300	12
b. Were admitted to take courses on your campus.	99	50	1	1,168	9
c. Actually took one or more campus courses.	87	38	1	1,168	5
d. Lived on campus.	3	0	0	41	11
e. Chose to drop one or more campus courses within the allowed drop/add period.	13	5	0	116	21

		Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	No Response
f.	Continued to take classes on your campus through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program after their first term.	66	33	1	800	12
g.	Received grades too low to continue taking any courses on your campus.	3	0	0	41	13
h.	Received grades too low to continue taking classes full-time on your campus.	3	0	0	60	19
i.	Were placed on academic probation on your campus.	10	1	0	175	14
j.	Were suspended from courses on your campus for reasons other than grades.	<1	0	0	12	8

12. To the best of your knowledge, about how many of the secondary students on your campus who used the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year displayed the following characteristics?

		Few or none		About one-fourth		About one-half		About three-fourths		All or nearly all		No Response or Don't know	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Earned postsecondary grades among top third of regularly admitted classmates.	7	9%	18	24%	14	18%	8	11%	7	9%	22	29%
b.	Earned postsecondary grades among bottom third of regularly admitted classmates.	27	36	16	21	6	8	3	4	2	3	22	29
c.	Similar in maturity to regularly admitted postsecondary classmates.	4	5	7	9	18	24	17	22	19	25	11	15
d.	Active in campus life.	30	40	15	20	4	5	5	7	3	4	19	25
e.	Self-motivated.	3	4	4	5	18	24	18	24	19	25	14	18
f.	Appropriately placed in postsecondary classes.	0	0	1	1	11	15	17	22	42	55	5	7
g.	Needed special services to be successful.	44	58	17	22	6	8	0	0	1	1	8	11
h.	Had social/behavior problems.	49	65	8	11	1	1	1	1	0	0	17	22
i.	Lacked necessary academic preparation for postsecondary education.	42	55	21	28	7	9	1	1	0	0	5	7
j.	Overcame previous boredom.	6	8	5	7	2	3	6	11	5	7	50	66
k.	Had family problems.	14	18	11	15	2	3	2	3	1	1	46	61
l.	Were incorrectly selected for admission.	57	75	6	8	1	1	0	0	0	0	12	16
m.	Other (please specify) see detail pages			1	1			1	1	2	3	72	95
n.	_____											76	100

13. Students use the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program for a variety of reasons. Please indicate how important you think the following reasons were to secondary students who took courses on your campus during the 1994-95 school year.

		Very Unimportant Reason		Unimportant Reason		Neither Important nor Unimportant Reason		Important Reason		Very Important Reason		No Response or Don't Know	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Courses were not available in the secondary school.	6	8%	2	3%	6	8%	38	50%	19	25%	5	7%
b.	Courses were more challenging on our campus.	3	4	5	7	16	21	28	37	16	21	8	11
c.	Courses were less challenging on our campus.	34	45	12	16	14	18	0	0	0	0	16	21
d.	To be with friends.	17	22	20	26	16	21	10	13	1	1	12	16
e.	To get a head start on college credits.	1	1	0	0	5	7	28	37	41	54	1	1
f.	To help decide whether or where to go to college after high school.	9	12	15	20	16	21	26	34	0	0	10	13
g.	To help get into this school after graduation.	22	29	15	20	18	24	17	22	1	1	3	4
h.	To be in a less restrictive learning environment.	3	4	6	8	10	13	38	50	14	18	5	7
i.	To save on postsecondary costs.	0	0	0	0	4	5	26	34	43	57	3	4
j.	To please parents.	2	3	5	7	28	37	20	26	5	7	16	21
k.	To be with more mature classmates.	5	7	9	12	23	30	26	34	2	3	11	15
l.	To improve students' social or emotional life.	5	7	14	18	18	24	20	26	0	0	19	25
m.	To avoid taking particular secondary courses or teachers.	4	5	17	22	13	17	18	24	4	5	20	26
n.	Our campus was conveniently located.	0	0	4	5	9	12	35	46	22	29	6	8
o.	Other *(please specify)*_____	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	3	2	3	71	93
p.	_____[1]											78	100

14. Which of the following methods did your school use to inform students and parents about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program on your campus for the 1994-95 school year?

		No, did not use this method		Yes, used this method		No Response or Don't know	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	News media or newsletters.	69	91%	6	8%	1	1%
b.	Described in our routine course registration materials.	50	66	25	33	1	1

		No, did not use this method		Yes, used this method		No Response or Don't know	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
c.	Special written materials displayed on campus for prospective students to take.	61	80%	15	20%	0	0%
d.	Special written materials sent on request.	13	17	63	83	0	0
e.	Special meetings at secondary schools to inform students of the program.	53	70	22	29	1	1
f.	Mentioned by recruiters in meetings with college-bound students.	38	50	31	41	7	9
g.	Postsecondary staff went to secondary schools to register students.	72	95	4	5	0	0
h.	Written information about course availability sent to secondary counselors.	32	42	44	58	0	0
i.	Posters or flyers about the program distributed to secondary schools.	68	90	7	9	1	1
j.	Advertisements about the program.	71	93	1	1	4	5
k.	Letters of invitation to select students.	74	97	1	1	1	1
l.	Special meetings on campus to inform secondary students of the program.	66	87	9	12	1	1
m.	Other *(please specify)* See detail pages.	0	0	8	11	68	90
n.	_____					76	100

15a. Since the 1994-95 school year, have you changed or are you planning to change the way(s) in which you notify students and parents about the availability of courses on your campus through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program?

No		Yes		No Response	
Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
66	87%	9	12%	1	1%

15b. If yes, in what way(s) have you changed or are you planning to change your notification procedures?

See detail pages.

16. When are secondary students typically allowed to register for classes taught on your campus?

Number	Percent	
1	1%	Before postsecondary students in general.
34	45	At about the same time as postsecondary students in general.
22	29	After postsecondary students in general have registered.
12	16	When we know if space remains after others have registered.
6	8	At some other time *(please explain)* See detail pages.
1	1	No response.

17. To what extent has your campus added more class sections to accommodate secondary students who want to take them?

Number	Percent	
51	67%	Never
20	26	Rarely
4	5	Sometimes
0	0	Often
1	1	No Response

18. Which of the following services, if any, did your campus provide to secondary students who took courses on your campus through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year?

		No, not provided		Yes, provided		No response or Don't know	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Specific person responsible to help students in the program.	15	20%	60	79%	1	1%
b.	General counseling on request.	3	4	73	96	0	0
c.	Required counseling before students enrolled.	14	18	61	80	1	1
d.	Special efforts to help students participate in campus activities.	63	83	10	13	3	4
e.	Routine, on-going contact with secondary staff for participating students.	33	43	40	53	3	4
f.	Contact on a case-by-case basis with secondary staff for students experiencing difficulty.	12	16	59	78	5	7
g.	Routine, on-going contact with parents of secondary students in the program.	65	86	7	9	4	5
h.	Contact on a case-by-case basis with parents of selected students experiencing difficulty.	37	49	34	45	5	7
i.	Periodic progress reports sent to students	28	37	46	61	2	3
j.	Periodic progress reports sent to parents.	64	84	9	12	3	4
k.	Periodic progress reports sent to secondary staff.	31	41	44	58	1	1
l.	Special campus orientation.	33	43	41	54	2	3
m.	Special tutoring, mentoring, or other academic support.	38	50	34	45	4	5
n.	Warning letters to students when postsecondary grades fell below a certain level.	23	30	51	67	2	3
o.	Other *(please specify)* See detail pages	0	0	8	11	68	90
p.	_____					76	100

19. Did your campus routinely send grade reports to parents of secondary students who took courses on campus during the 1994-95 school year?

Number	Percent	
55	72%	No
5	7	Yes
16	21	It depends (explain) See detail pages

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II. This final section focuses on the impact the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program has had on your campus since the program began in the 1985-86 school year.

20. First, please indicate whether and how the following aspects of your campus have been affected by the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Then please indicate whether this has been a problem.

		Type of Effect								Of those affected: Was Change a Problem?			
		None		Decrease		Increase		No Response or Don't Know		No		Yes	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Number of courses taught.	62	82%	0	0%	9	12%	5	7%	9	100%	0	0%
b.	Quality of courses taught.	67	88	0	0	4	5	5	7	4	80	0	0
c.	Cooperative efforts with secondary schools.	19	25	3	4	50	66	4	5	41	77	8	15
d.	Communication with secondary schools.	10	13	1	1	63	83	2	3	53	83	4	8
e.	Use of technology, such as interactive television.	65	86	0	0	8	11	3	4	6	75	0	0
f.	Ability to plan and schedule classes.	60	79	3	4	11	15	2	3	7	50	5	36
g.	Ability to budget resources.	53	70	5	7	10	13	8	11	8	53	6	40
h.	Ability to provide appropriate staffing levels.	50	66	6	8	15	20	5	7	7	33	11	52
i.	Student participation in your school's activities.	47	62	0	0	16	21	13	17	10	63	1	6
j.	Student/staff interaction.	39	51	2	3	27	36	8	11	18	62	3	10
k.	Parental involvement in children's education.	30	40	0	0	24	32	22	29	14	58	4	17
l.	Student morale.	47	62	0	0	8	11	21	28	5	63	0	0
m.	Staff morale.	44	58	7	9	8	11	17	59	5	33	5	33
n.	Providing interested and participating students with needed support services.	36	47	2	3	32	42	6	8	34	56	9	26
o.	Other *(specify)* None												

21. In your opinion, do any of the following aspects of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program need improvement, insofar as the program allows students to take courses at postsecondary schools?

		Need for Improvement											
		None		Little		Some		Much		Critical		No Response or Don't Know	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	Information provided by your campus.	24	32%	25	33%	19	25%	3	4%	1	1%	4	5%
b.	Information provided by secondary schools.	7	9	6	8	25	33	23	30	12	16	3	4

		Need for Improvement											
		None		Little		Some		Much		Critical		No Response or Don't Know	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
c.	Information provided by the Department of Children, Families, and Learning (formerly the Department of Education).	8	11%	9	12%	21	28%	14	18%	8	11%	16	21%
d.	Communication between your campus and secondary schools.	8	11	21	28	36	47	7	9	2	3	2	3
e.	Counseling on your campus.	24	32	24	32	21	28	2	3	0	0	5	7
f.	Counseling by secondary schools.	3	4	13	17	14	18	24	32	13	17	9	12
g.	Timing of student notification to your campus about enrolling in postsecondary courses.	16	21	18	24	24	32	13	17	4	5	1	1
h.	Rules or procedures for credit transfer to secondary schools.	18	24	12	16	20	26	15	20	2	3	9	12
i.	Rules or procedures for credit transfer to postsecondary schools.	19	25	16	21	21	28	14	18	3	4	3	4
j.	Nature of postsecondary courses students take.	24	32	18	24	21	28	8	11	3	4	2	3
k.	Information from secondary schools about graduation requirements.	10	13	17	22	21	28	13	17	10	13	5	7
l.	Amount of payment to postsecondary schools for students who participate.	11	15	15	20	15	20	11	15	17	22	7	9
m.	Transportation.	25	33	13	17	14	18	5	7	1	1	18	24
o.	Other *(please specify)* See detail pages.					2	3	1	1	1	1	72	95

22. Please indicate whether you generally agree or disagree with the following statements about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		No Response or Don't Know	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
a.	The program has generally promoted rigorous academic pursuits.	2	3%	12	16%	17	22%	35	46%	8	11%	2	3%
b.	The program has generally provided a wider variety of options to students.	0	0	2	3	2	3	43	57	29	38	0	0

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		No Response or Don't Know	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
c.	The time and costs of implementing and running the program have outweighed its benefits.	10	13%	29	38%	15	20%	9	12%	7	9%	6	8%
d.	Students generally have gained from their participation.	0	0	4	5	7	9	40	53	23	30	2	3
e.	The program has had an overall negative impact on secondary schools.	8	11	27	36	15	20	11	15	2	3	13	17
f.	The program is readily available to interested students.	1	1	15	20	12	16	32	42	8	11	8	11
g.	Secondary staff have encouraged appropriate students to participate.	10	13	30	40	17	22	6	8	2	3	11	15
h.	It is too early to judge the program's overall effect on students.	9	12	37	49	16	21	4	5	1	1	9	12
i.	Parents and students need to be more aware of the risks associated with the program.	0	0	5	7	11	15	34	45	24	32	2	3
j.	Secondary schools should have more control over students' use of the program.	5	7	23	30	14	18	21	28	10	13	3	4
k.	The program has had an overall positive effect on post-secondary schools.	5	7	4	5	34	45	25	33	4	5	4	5
l.	Postsecondary staff have supported secondary students' enrollment.	0	0	2	3	19	25	40	53	11	15	4	5
m.	Postsecondary schools need to be more selective about admissions.	1	1	11	15	19	25	30	40	13	17	2	3
n.	The program is generally performing in a satisfactory manner.	1	1	7	9	13	17	45	59	9	12	1	1
o.	Other *(please specify)* See detail pages.							1	1	2	3	73	96

23. In your opinion, what are the major strengths of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program?

Number	Percent	
5	7%	No Comments
71	93	Comments - See detail pages.

24. In your opinion, what are the major weaknesses of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program?

Number	Percent	
9	12%	No Comments
67	88	Comments - See detail pages.

DETAIL

Question 9. **Categorization of means by which secondary students took classes on campus other than through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program in 1994-95**

	(Of those who said "Yes") Number	Percent
Self-paying special cases	16	44%
Students not qualified for Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program (such as private, home-schooled, or nonresident students)	9	25
Contract with school district	6	17
Concurrent enrollment	4	11
Other	3	4

Question 12m. **Other characteristics of secondary students who used the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program on campus during the 1994-95 school year (mentioned once each)**

Completed requirements independently (registered, transferred, etc.)

Needed extensive assistance and time from admissions office staff

Chose to attend for financial reasons

Major medical problem

Question 13o. **Other reasons students used the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program to take campus courses during the 1994-95 school year (mentioned once each)**

Education for employment

To practice college study skills with a class or two

To escape small town or move out of parents' home

Student did not do well in traditional secondary school or GED program

To leave high school

Question 15b. **Ways in which campus plans to change procedures for notifying students and parents about the availability of campus courses through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program (mentioned once each)**

We are studying how to best serve these students and then our plan of action will be developed. Much depends on legislative support for this program

Try to work more closely with students to assist them with career decisions

An annual mailing to counselors detailing the program--eligibility, process, etc., and increased eligibility requirements to upper 50% of junior/senior class with right of appeal by high school counselor or administrator

Instead of personal admissions meetings and interviews, all application processes and acceptance will be done by mail

We will no longer be distributing information about PSEO through our quarterly promotional mailing

We will do more outreach to secondary schools, at career fairs, etc.

Increased recruitment efforts in high schools through written material sent to parents and more information meetings in the community

Question 16. **Categorization of other times secondary students are allowed to register for classes taught on campus**

	Number	Percent
Varies depending on the quarter, students' graduation status, credit load, and/or course enrollment	9	12%
About the same time but not first	1	1
After students in general and professor gives approval	1	1
Year-round school with monthly registrations	1	1

Question 18o. **Other services campus provides to Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program students who took campus courses during the 1994-95 school year (mentioned once each)**

They go through regular orientation

We required parent visit with counselor before admission

Tutoring is available as it is to all students

Case management

Parents and students had to attend a conference

Special advising sessions held each quarter

Group activities

Question 19. **Categorization of explanations for situations where "it depends" whether campuses sent grade reports to parents of secondary students who took courses on campus during the 1994-95 school year**

	Number	Percent
If students or high schools provide grades to parents	9	12%
If parent or student requests	3	4
If grade release is signed	2	3
If students are under 18	2	3
First quarter only	1	1

Question 21o. **Other aspects of Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program needing improvement insofar as students are allowed to take courses at postsecondary schools (mentioned once each)**

Obtaining books

Obtaining books and supplies

Late legislative law change regarding developmental (remedial) coursework

Informing parents of the ins and outs of the program

Question 22o. **Other statements about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program (mentioned once each)**

Would you send your children to PSEO?

High school counselors increasingly support [the program]

Question 23. **Categorization of major strengths of Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program**

	Number	Percent
Allows advanced students to learn beyond high school curriculum and be further challenged academically	33	43%
Gives students more course options and more educational enrichment	33	43
Allows students, parents, and/or the state to save money on college	9	12
Allows students who do not thrive in traditional high school to find suitable courses	8	11
Allows students to earn college credit before graduating from high school	6	8
Allows students to sample college and be exposed to its demands	6	8
Provides technical college courses and hands-on training not otherwise available	6	8
Promotes higher learning standards	5	7
Helps students form ideas of career goals earlier in life	5	7
Provides courses addressing various learning styles	4	5
Rewards students who have done well and worked hard	1	1

Question 24. **Categorization of major weaknesses of Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program**

	Number	Percent
Students not prepared academically, emotionally, and/or socially	22	29%
High schools fail to provide information to students about program or support to those in program	20	26
Places financial considerations of parents or institutions ahead of student needs	14	18
Students use program to avoid high school challenges	11	15
Program has administrative problems related to admissions, coordination, control, scheduling, or rules	9	12
Harms financial status of high schools	9	12
Access limited by geography, type of secondary school, and students' grade in school	8	11
Harms colleges financially	8	11
Deprives high schools of students who would be leaders or academically exceptional students	6	8
Program is last resort for high-risk students, or "dumping ground" for poor students	5	7
Students enroll for the wrong reasons	4	5

Student/Parent Surveys

APPENDIX C

Telephone interviews were conducted November 13 through November 21, 1995, by Northstar Interviewing Service, Inc. of Edina under the supervision of the Office of the Legislative Auditor. Professional interviewers spoke with a random sample of 300 high school juniors and seniors who, according to the Department of Children, Families and Learning, participated in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program during the 1994-95 school year. Either a parent or a guardian of these students was first interviewed in a separate portion of the phone call or in a separate call and gave permission to speak with their children.

The student sample was "stratified" by grade level -- that is, selected to ensure that the proper proportion of juniors and seniors was interviewed. Thus, because 73 percent of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program participants were seniors in 1994-95, our sample of 300 also was 73 percent seniors. To assess the representativeness of the sample, we compared the respondents to the population of Postsecondary Enrollment Options students, as shown in Table C.1. Results show that the survey respondents were similar in terms of geographic location and sex.

However, the sample was somewhat unrepresentative of student enrollment in various types of postsecondary schools. To compensate, we used standard statistical weighting techniques to ensure that the correct percentages were used in analyses by type of postsecondary school. As shown in the table, it was necessary to slightly up-weight responses from students who attended some types of postsecondary schools and down-weight others.

The two samples of 300 students and 300 of their parents represented 4.5 percent of the overall Postsecondary Enrollment Options student population of 6,671 during the 1994-95 school year. Both have a margin of error of plus or minus 6 percentage points due to sampling. In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any opinion survey may introduce other sources of error into the results.

Table C.1: Comparison Between Population of 1994-95 Postsecondary Enrollment Options Students and Student Survey Sample

	All Postsecondary Enrollment Options Students	Student Survey Respondents	
REGION			
North (#1, 2, 3, and 5)	14%	14%	
Central (#4, 6, and 7)	20	20	
South (#8, 9, and 10)	14	15	
Twin Cities Proper (#11)	17	12	
Twin Cities Suburbs	36	39	
GRADE			
11	27%	27%	
12	73	73	
SEX			
Male	37%	33%	
Female	64	67	
TYPE OF POSTSECONDARY SCHOOL ATTENDED		Originally	After Weighting
Technical College	18%	9%	18%
Community College	45	49	46
State University	8	8	9
University of Minnesota	21	27	20
Private College	8	7	8
Private Vocational School	<1	0	0

Notes:

(1) Some figures do not total 100 due to rounding.

(2) Some students attended more than one type of school and so their responses could not be weighted and included in analyses by type of postsecondary school. Geographic region is based on the location of Educational Cooperative Service Units (ECSUs).

OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
Questionnaire for Parents of 1994-95 Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program Participants

November 1995

Results are based on telephone interviews conducted November 13 through November 21, 1995. Percentages are based on all 300 parents interviewed unless otherwise indicated.

Note: Some percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Results are subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

Hello. My name is _____ and I'm calling from _____ on behalf of the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor. May I speak to a parent or guardian of _____ (fill in name of student).

We are doing a study for the 1996 Legislature on the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. As you probably know, the program permits high school students to take college courses at state expense. Our records show that your child _____ (fill in name) used the program during the 1994-95 school year to take at least one course at a postsecondary school last year. Is that right?

(If no) Thank you for your time.

What is your relationship to _____(fill in name) -- are you her/his father, mother, or guardian?

	Number	Percent
Father	100	33%
Mother	189	63
Guardian	3	1
Other	4	1
No response	4	1

I'd like to ask you and your child _____ a few questions about your experiences with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Is that okay with you?

1. **First, I'm going to read some ways you might have gotten information about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program last year -- the program allows high school juniors and seniors to take college courses for free. Please tell me if you got information about the program in any of these ways.**

   a. From your child

	Number	Percent
Yes	211	70%
No	78	26
Don't Know	7	2
No Response	4	1

b. From someone at your child's school -- for example, a counselor, teacher, or administrator

	Number	Percent
Yes	145	48%
No	144	48
Don't Know	7	2
No Response	4	1

c. Printed material from your child's high school

	Number	Percent
Yes	106	35%
No	161	54
Don't Know	29	10
No Response	4	1

d. From someone at a postsecondary school -- for example, a counselor, instructor, or dean

	Number	Percent
Yes	60	20%
No	226	75
Don't Know	10	3
No Response	4	1

e. Printed material from a postsecondary school

	Number	Percent
Yes	62	21%
No	218	73
Don't Know	16	5
No Response	4	1

f. Family or friends

	Number	Percent
Yes	154	51%
No	140	47
Don't Know	2	1
No Response	4	1

g. (Probe) Anyone else?

	Number	Percent
Yes (Specify) See detail pages	33	11%
No	262	87
Don't Know	1	0
No Response	4	1

2. **Looking back, how satisfied were you with the amount of helpful information you had about the program -- very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?**

	Number	Percent
Very satisfied	107	36%
Somewhat satisfied	91	30
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	36	12
Somewhat dissatisfied	32	11
Very dissatisfied	17	6
Don't Know	13	4
No Response	4	1

3. **To the best of your knowledge, how encouraging was your child's high school about your child participating in the program last year -- very encouraging, somewhat encouraging, neither encouraging nor discouraging, somewhat discouraging, or very discouraging?**

	Number	Percent
Very encouraging	96	32%
Somewhat encouraging	74	25
Neither encouraging nor discouraging	60	20
Somewhat discouraging	28	9
Very discouraging	26	9
Don't Know	12	4
No Response	4	1

4. **Next, I'm going to read a list of possible reasons why you might have wanted your child to participate in the program last year. As I read each reason, please tell me how important each was to you -- very important, somewhat important, neither important nor unimportant, somewhat unimportant, or very unimportant?**

a. To take more challenging courses

	Number	Percent
Very important	149	50%
Somewhat important	107	36
Neither important nor unimportant	20	7
Somewhat unimportant	17	6
Very unimportant	1	0
Don't Know	2	1
No Response	4	1

b. To take courses not available in your child's high school

	Number	Percent
Very important	132	44%
Somewhat important	90	30
Neither important nor unimportant	29	10
Somewhat unimportant	36	12
Very unimportant	6	2
Don't Know	3	1
No Response	4	1

c. To get a head start on college credits

	Number	Percent
Very important	199	66%
Somewhat important	62	21
Neither important nor unimportant	16	5
Somewhat unimportant	16	5
Very unimportant	3	1
Don't Know	0	0
No Response	4	1

d. To save on postsecondary costs

	Number	Percent
Very important	168	56%
Somewhat important	63	21
Neither important nor unimportant	37	12
Somewhat unimportant	19	6
Very unimportant	8	3
Don't Know	1	0
No Response	4	1

e. (Probe) Any other reason?

	Number	Percent
Yes (Specify) See detail pages	110	37%
No	186	62
Don't Know	0	0
No Response	4	1

f. *(If yes)* How important was it -- very important, somewhat important, neither important nor unimportant, somewhat unimportant, or very unimportant?

	Of those who mentioned another reason:	
	Number	Percent
Very important	85	77%
Somewhat important	21	19
Neither important nor unimportant	3	3
Somewhat unimportant	1	1
Very unimportant	0	0
Don't Know	0	0

5. I am going to list some areas where improvements might be needed in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. As I read each one, please tell me whether you think there is no need for improvement, a little need for improvement, some need for improvement, much need for improvement, or a critical need for improvement?

a. Information about the program provided by your child's high school

	Number	Percent
No need	57	19%
A little need	37	12
Some need	85	28
Much need	65	22
Critical need	41	14
Don't Know	11	4
No Response	4	1

b. Information about the program provided by postsecondary institutions

	Number	Percent
No need	78	26%
A little need	35	12
Some need	84	28
Much need	56	19
Critical need	25	8
Don't Know	18	6
No Response	4	1

c. Counseling at your child's high school

	Number	Percent
No need	103	34%
A little need	35	12
Some need	55	18
Much need	53	18
Critical need	38	13
Don't Know	12	4
No Response	4	1

d. Counseling at the postsecondary school

	Number	Percent
No need	102	34%
A little need	42	14
Some need	65	22
Much need	25	8
Critical need	21	7
Don't Know	41	14
No Response	4	1

e. Rules or procedures for transferring credits back to high school

	Number	Percent
No need	139	46%
A little need	28	9
Some need	46	15
Much need	25	8
Critical need	24	8
Don't Know	34	11
No Response	4	1

f. Rules or procedures for transferring credits to postsecondary schools

	Number	Percent
No need	109	36%
A little need	34	11
Some need	52	17
Much need	23	8
Critical need	20	7
Don't Know	58	19
No Response	4	1

g. Information from postsecondary schools about your child's performance in courses

	Number	Percent
No need	145	48%
A little need	42	14
Some need	48	16
Much need	28	9
Critical need	20	7
Don't Know	13	4
No Response	4	1

h. (Probe) Any other area needing improvement?

	Number	Percent
No, none	226	75%
Yes (specify) See detail pages	65	22
Don't Know	5	2
No Response	4	1

i. *(If yes)* Is there a little need, some need, much need, or a critical need for improvement?

	Of those who mentioned another area:	
	Number	Percent
A little need	1	2%
Some need	14	22
Much need	18	28
Critical need	32	49
Don't Know	0	0

6. **Looking back on your child's experiences in the program last year, if you had to do it all over again, how likely would you be to encourage your child to participate again -- would you definitely, probably, probably not, or definitely not encourage your child?**

	Number	Percent
Definitely encourage	241	80%
Probably encourage	38	13
Probably not encourage	13	4
Definitely not encourage	3	1
Don't Know	0	0
No Response	5	2

Now, we would like to get some basic descriptive information about your family.

7. **What is the highest level of education of anyone in your household -- some high school, a high school diploma, some college, a 2-year degree, a 4-year degree, or postgraduate work?**

	Number	Percent
Some high school	1	0%
A high school diploma	24	8
Some college	49	16
2-year degree	49	16
4-year degree	87	29
Postgraduate	84	28
Other	2	1
Don't Know	0	0
No Response	4	1

8. **Approximately what was your total family income last year-- was it less than $15,000, between $15,000 and $29,999, between $30,000 and $44,999, between $45,000 and $59,999, or $60,000 or more?**

	Number	Percent
Less than $15,000	10	3%
Between $15,000 and $29,999	34	11
Between $30,000 and $44,999	75	25
Between $45,000 and $59,999	73	24
$60,000 or more	93	31
Don't Know	0	0
No Response	15	5

9. **Finally, which of the following types of schools was your child enrolled in during her/his sophomore year -- a public high school in Minnesota, a private high school in Minnesota, a home school in Minnesota, or a school in another state?**

	Number	Percent
Minnesota public high school	280	93%
Minnesota private high school	3	1
Minnesota home school	3	1
School in another state	5	2
Other	5	2
Don't Know	0	0
No Response	4	1

Thank you for your time.

Detail

Question 1g: Categorization of other methods by which parents received information about Postsecondary Enrollment Options program

	Of those who mentioned other methods:	
	Number	Percent
Newspapers, other media outlets	19	58%
Other students/parents, general word of mouth	5	15
School or other educational institutional sources	5	15
Miscellaneous	4	12

Question 4e: Categorization of other reasons why parents wanted their children to participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program

	Of those who mentioned other reasons:	
	Number	Percent
Student did not thrive or was bored in high school, sought change	28	23%
Miscellaneous (such as "gave him something to do," "overcrowding at high school," "self-esteem outside sports")	25	22
Allowed student to sample college and be exposed to its demands	24	21
Student needed academic challenge	16	14
Student needed more social/maturation opportunities	15	13
Student needed more course options	6	5
Student wanted to earn college credit before graduating high school	2	2
Helped student form career goals	1	1

Question 5h: Categorization of other areas of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program that parents view as needing improvement

	Of those who mentioned other areas:	
	Number	Percent
Communication	17	28%
Scheduling/procedures/rules	15	25
Miscellaneous (such as, "no opportunity for picture in yearbook," "establish a financial cap")	9	15
Counseling/support	8	13
Expand course offerings	4	7
Tougher admissions standards	4	7
More support for program from high schools	2	3
Limit course offerings, such as eliminating gym	1	2

OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

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Note: Some percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Results are subject to sampling error of ± 6 percentage points.

Hello. My name is_____ and I'm calling from_____ on behalf of the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor. We are doing a study for the 1996 Legislature on the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. Our records show that you enrolled in at least one course at a postsecondary school during the 1994-95 school year. Is that right?

1. Yes
2. No

(If yes)

The Legislature is interested in hearing about the experiences of students who participated in the program, and you were picked as part of a random sample. The questions will take about 20 minutes, and your individual responses will be confidential. I'd like to ask you some questions about your experiences with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program.

(If no)

Thank you for your time.

ID Number _____

1. We're going to begin by looking at some ways you might have gotten information last year about the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. First, what about written materials from your high school – did you get information about the program in any of the following types of written materials?

		Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Parent-student handbook	Number	57	219	24
	Percent	19%	73%	8%
b. Course registration materials for your high school	Number	109	180	11
	Percent	36%	60%	4%
c. Pamphlets/brochures on display in your school	Number	92	201	7
	Percent	31%	67%	2%
d. Posters at your school	Number	25	269	6
	Percent	8%	90%	2%
e. Information sent to all parents	Number	50	229	21
	Percent	17%	76%	7%
f. Information sent to all students	Number	62	221	17
	Percent	21%	74%	6%
g. Information sent at your parents' request	Number	54	234	12
	Percent	18%	78%	4%
h. Information sent at your request	Number	164	133	3
	Percent	55%	44%	1%
i. Was the program discussed at informational meetings for all students at your high school?	Number	90	196	14
	Percent	30%	65%	5%
j. Was it discussed at meetings for college-bound students?	Number	102	159	39
	Percent	34%	53%	13%

Did any of the following people personally suggest the program to you?

k. A high school teacher	Number	92	207	1
	Percent	31%	69%	<1%
l. A high school counselor	Number	166	134	0
	Percent	55%	45%	0%
m. Postsecondary school staff	Number	54	244	2
	Percent	18%	81%	1%

		Yes	No	Don't Know
n. Parents/family				
	Number	197	103	0
	Percent	66%	34%	0%
o. Friends or other students				
	Number	223	77	0
	Percent	74%	26%	0%
p. Did postsecondary staff come to your school to talk about the program?				
	Number	46	242	12
	Percent	15%	81%	4%
q. Did you get any written information about the program from a postsecondary school?				
	Number	178	118	4
	Percent	59%	39%	1%
r. Was the program announced over your high school's public announcement system?				
	Number	36	252	12
	Percent	12%	84%	4%
s. Did you hear about it through the news media?				
	Number	39	260	1
	Percent	13%	87%	<1%
t. (Probe) Anything else? *(If yes, specify)*				
	Number	1	298	1
	Percent	0%	99%	<1%

See detail pages.

2. Which of the following different types of information sources was the most helpful to you? (Read list 1 through 6 if necessary– select one)

	Number	Percent
Written materials from your high school	47	16%
Informational meetings held at your high school	29	10
Personal suggestions	172	57
Information from a postsecondary school	47	16
Local media	3	1
Other (Specify)_____	0	0
Don't Know	2	1

3. Looking back, how easy was it to get helpful information about the program -- was it very easy, somewhat easy, neither easy nor difficult, somewhat difficult, or very difficult?

	Number	Percent
Very easy	93	31%
Somewhat easy	108	36
Neither easy nor difficult	45	15
Somewhat difficult	44	15
Very difficult	10	3
Don't Know	0	0

4. Next, I am going to read a list of reasons why students might choose to use the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program to take courses at postsecondary schools. As I read each reason, please tell me how important each reason was to you – was it very important, important, neither important nor unimportant, unimportant, or very unimportant?

		Very Important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Very Unimportant	Don't Know
a.	Courses were not available in your school.						
	Number	71	104	37	80	7	0
	Percent	24%	35%	12%	27%	2%	0%
b.	Courses were more challenging than those in your school.						
	Number	101	129	24	41	4	0
	Percent	34%	43%	8%	14%	1%	0%
c.	Courses were less challenging than those in your school.						
	Number	5	22	36	146	90	1
	Percent	2%	7%	12%	49%	30%	<1%
d.	To be with friends.						
	Number	6	36	36	145	77	0
	Percent	2%	12%	12%	48%	26%	0%
e.	To get a head start on college credits.						
	Number	219	64	8	7	2	0
	Percent	73%	21%	3%	2%	1%	0%
f.	To help decide whether or where to go to college after high school.						
	Number	58	99	47	83	13	0
	Percent	19%	33%	16%	27%	4%	0%
g.	To help get into a certain college after graduation.						
	Number	34	79	70	100	17	0
	Percent	11%	26%	23%	33%	6%	0%
h.	To be in a less restrictive learning environment.						
	Number	82	109	38	65	4	2
	Percent	27%	36%	13%	22%	1%	1%
i.	To save on postsecondary costs.						
	Number	133	114	20	30	3	0
	Percent	44%	38%	7%	10%	1%	0%
j.	To please your parents.						
	Number	12	58	68	122	40	0
	Percent	4%	19%	23%	41%	13%	0%
k.	To be with more mature classmates.						
	Number	41	134	56	64	5	0
	Percent	14%	45%	19%	21%	2%	0%
l.	To improve your social or emotional life.						
	Number	11	61	86	116	26	0
	Percent	4%	20%	29%	39%	9%	0%

		Very Important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Very Unimportant	Don't Know	No Response
m.	To avoid taking particular courses or teachers.							
	Number	11	43	44	161	41	0	
	Percent	4%	14%	15%	54%	14%	0%	
n.	To take advantage of a convenient location.							
	Number	30	108	49	97	16	0	
	Percent	10%	36%	16%	32%	5%	0%	
o.	(Probe) Any other reason? *(Specify)* See detail pages.							
	Number	23	9	0	0	0	0	268
	Percent	7%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	89%

5. **A number of different people might have been involved in your decision to participate in the program last year. As I read the following list, please tell me whether each of these people was involved and, if so, whether they generally encouraged or discouraged you from participating, or stayed neutral?**

	Number	Percent
a. Secondary teachers		
Yes, involved	136	45%
No, not involved	160	53
Don't know	3	1
No response	1	0
b. *(If yes)* Did they generally encourage you, discourage you, or stay neutral?		
	Of those who said yes:	
Encouraged	100	73%
Discouraged	13	10
Neutral	24	18
Don't know	0	0
c. Secondary counselors		
Yes, involved	226	75%
No, not involved	72	24
Don't know	2	1
No response	38	11
d. *(If yes)* Did they generally encourage you, discourage you, or stay neutral?		
	Of those who said yes:	
Encouraged	163	72%
Discouraged	18	8
Neutral	45	20
Don't know	0	0
e. Secondary administrators, such as principals or the superintendent		
Yes, involved	60	20%
No, not involved	236	79
Don't know	3	1
No response	1	<1

	Number	Percent
f. *(If yes)* Did they generally encourage you, discourage you, or stay neutral?		
	Of those who said yes:	
Encouraged	43	72%
Discouraged	8	13
Neutral	10	17
Don't know	0	0
g. Postsecondary staff, such as counselors, instructors, or deans		
Yes, involved	153	51%
No, not involved	147	49
Don't know	0	0
No response	0	0
h. *(If yes)* Did they generally encourage you, discourage you, or stay neutral?		
	Of those who said yes:	
Encouraged	133	87%
Discouraged	5	3
Neutral	15	10
Don't know	0	0
i. Parents/family		
Yes, involved	280	93%
No, not involved	20	7
Don't know	0	0
No response	0	0
j. *(If yes)* Did they generally encourage you, discourage you, or stay neutral?		
	Of those who said yes:	
Encouraged	239	85%
Discouraged	3	1
Neutral	38	14
Don't know	0	0
k. Friends/other students		
Yes, involved	220	73%
No, not involved	80	27
Don't know	0	0
No response	0	0
l. *(If yes)* Did they generally encourage you, discourage you, or stay neutral?		
	Of those who said yes:	
Encouraged	165	75%
Discouraged	17	8
Neutral	38	17
Don't know	0	0
m. (Probe) Anyone else?		
Yes, involved (Specify) See detail pages.	8	3%
No, not involved	291	97
Don't know	0	0
No response	1	<1

	Number	Percent
n. *(If yes)* Did they generally encourage you, discourage you, or stay neutral?		
	Of those who said yes:	
Encouraged	8	100%
Discouraged	1	<1
Neutral	0	0
Don't know	0	0

6. **Next, I am going to read you a list of reasons why you might have chosen to attend the particular postsecondary school that you did last school year. Please tell me whether each was a major or minor reason why you went where you did, or no reason at all.**

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	No Reason At All	Don't Know
a. It was the only school offering the courses that you wanted.				
Number	40	65	194	1
Percent	13%	22%	65%	<1%
b. It was close to your home or secondary school.				
Number	181	72	47	0
Percent	60%	24%	16%	0%
c. Transportation was easy.				
Number	162	73	65	0
Percent	54%	42%	22%	0%
d. You thought you could learn a lot there.				
Number	215	58	25	2
Percent	72%	19%	8%	1%
e. Your parents thought highly of this school.				
Number	62	119	119	0
Percent	21%	40%	40%	0%
f. Your friends were going there.				
Number	40	108	152	0
Percent	13%	36%	51%	0%
g. You thought it would not be too difficult.				
Number	35	118	143	4
Percent	12%	39%	48%	1%
h. You thought you might want to attend this school after graduating from high school.				
Number	110	91	98	1
Percent	37%	30%	33%	<1%

i. (Probe) Anything else?	Number	Percent
Yes (Specify) See detail pages.	35	12%
No	263	88
Don't know	1	0
No response	1	0

j. *(If yes)* Was this a major or minor reason?	Of those who said yes:	
Major	30	86%
Minor	5	14

7. **Some students might have problems using the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. I am going to list some possible problems and, as I read each one, please tell me whether it was a major or minor problem for you last year, or no problem at all.**

		Major Problem	Minor Problem	No Problem	Don't Know
a.	Falling behind in the number of high school credits necessary to graduate.				
	Number	13	40	247	0
	Percent	4%	13%	82%	0%
b.	Getting poor grades in your postsecondary courses, that is, below average.				
	Number	9	52	238	1
	Percent	3%	17%	79%	<1%
c.	Scheduling difficulties between your secondary and postsecondary schools.				
	Number	35	73	192	0
	Percent	12%	24%	64%	0%
d.	Transferring credits from your postsecondary school back to your secondary school.				
	Number	18	63	219	0
	Percent	6%	21%	73%	0%
e.	Not having enough time for regular high school activities, like sports, clubs and dances.				
	Number	16	70	214	0
	Percent	5%	23%	71%	0%
f.	Secondary school staff not supporting your decision to participate.				
	Number	32	53	215	0
	Percent	11%	18%	72%	0%
g.	Unhelpful postsecondary instructors or staff				
	Number	13	51	236	0
	Percent	4%	17%	79%	0%
h.	Hurting your chances for future scholarships/financial aid.				
	Number	15	47	230	8
	Percent	5%	16%	77%	3%
i.	Transportation to and from your postsecondary school.				
	Number	15	73	212	0
	Percent	5%	24%	71%	0%
j.	Being able to enroll in the postsecondary classes that you wanted				
	Number	24	84	192	0
	Percent	8%	28%	64%	0%
k.	Not fitting into the college scene				
	Number	3	49	248	0
	Percent	1%	16%	83%	0%

l. (Probe) Any other problems?	Number	Percent
Yes (Specify) See detail pages.	14	5%
No	283	95
Don't Know	2	1
No Response	1	<1

m. (*If yes*) Major or minor problem?	Of those who said yes:	
Major	9	3%
Minor	6	2

8. Now I'm going to read a list of possible benefits you might have gotten from participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program last year. As I read each one, please tell me whether it was a major or minor benefit to you, or no benefit at all.

	Major Benefit	Minor Benefit	No Benefit	Don't Know	No Response
a. Becoming better prepared academically					
Number	222	66	12	0	0
Percent	74%	22%	4%	0%	0%
b. Knowing more about what you wanted to do the next year					
Number	167	85	48	0	0
Percent	56%	28%	16%	0%	0%
c. Learning about your academic strengths and weaknesses					
Number	152	113	35	0	0
Percent	51%	38%	12%	0%	0%
d. Knowing what to expect from college					
Number	224	63	13	0	0
Percent	75%	21%	4%	0%	0%
e. Learning more than you could in high school					
Number	229	53	18	0	0
Percent	76%	18%	6%	0%	<1%
f. Saving money because tuition was free					
Number	214	67	18	0	1
Percent	71%	22%	6%	0%	<1%
g. Saving time because your courses could count for secondary and postsecondary credit					
Number	226	57	17	0	0
Percent	75%	19%	6%	0%	0%

h. (Probe) Any other benefit?	Number	Percent
Yes (Specify) See detail pages.	38	13%
No	262	87
Don't Know	0	0

i. (*If yes*)	Of those who said yes:	
Major benefit	34	89%
Minor benefit	4	11
Don't Know	0	0

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9. **Now, I'd like you to compare your postsecondary course work with your secondary school course work. Were your postsecondary courses more challenging, less challenging, or about as challenging as your secondary courses?**

	Number	Percent
More challenging	223	74%
Less challenging	18	6
About as challenging	56	19
Don't know	3	1

10. **Did your postsecondary course work proceed at a faster pace, slower pace, or about the same pace as your secondary course work?**

	Number	Percent
Faster pace	259	86%
Slower pace	8	3
About the same pace	31	10
Don't know	2	1

11. **Did your postsecondary course work cover the subject matter in more depth, less depth, or about the same amount of depth as your secondary classes?**

	Number	Percent
More depth	215	72%
Less depth	23	8
About the same	60	20
Don't know	2	1

12. **How about the amount of time you spent on homework -- on average, did you spend more time, less time, or about the same amount of time studying or doing homework for your postsecondary course work than you spent on your secondary classes?**

	Number	Percent
More time on postsecondary courses	204	68%
Less time on postsecondary courses	25	8
About the same amount of time	71	24
Don't know	0	0

13. **How did participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program affect the amount of time you spent on high school activities last year -- did your participation increase, decrease, or have no effect?**

	Number	Percent
Increased the amount of time	14	5%
Decreased the amount of time	76	25
No effect on the amount of time	209	70
Don't know	1	<1

14. **How did participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program affect your high school grade point average -- did your participation make your grade point average go up considerably, up a little, have no effect, go down a little, or down considerably?**

	Number	Percent
Up considerably	23	8%
Up a little	82	27
Have no effect	121	40
Down a little	65	22
Down considerably	4	1
Don't know	5	2

15. How well do you think your secondary school coursework prepared you for the postsecondary courses that you took during the 1994-95 school year -- not enough, about the right amount, or more than enough?

	Number	Percent
Not enough	110	37%
About the right amount	153	51
More than enough	32	11
Don't know	5	2

16a. How about counseling at the postsecondary school you attended last year? Did you meet with a postsecondary counselor before starting classes?

	Number	Percent
Yes	240	80%
No	58	19
Don't know	1	<1
No response	1	<1

16b. *(If yes to 16a)* Was this very helpful, somewhat helpful, neither helpful nor unhelpful, somewhat unhelpful, or very unhelpful to you?

	Of those who said yes:	
	Number	Percent
Very helpful	103	43%
Somewhat helpful	95	39
Neither helpful nor unhelpful	29	12
Somewhat unhelpful	9	4
Very unhelpful	5	2

17a. After you started your postsecondary classes, did you ever meet with a postsecondary counselor or administrator, not a teacher or instructor, to talk about your progress?

	Number	Percent
Yes	149	50%
No	150	50
Don't know	0	0
No response	1	<1

17b. *(If yes to 17a)* Did you ask to meet with a counselor or administrator or did one of them ask to meet with you?

	Of those who said yes:	
	Number	Percent
You asked	79	53%
They asked	68	46
Don't know	2	1

17c. *(If yes to 17a)* Overall, was this counseling very helpful, somewhat helpful, neither helpful nor unhelpful, somewhat unhelpful, or very unhelpful to you?

	Of those who said yes:	
	Number	Percent
Very helpful	63	42%
Somewhat helpful	69	46
Neither helpful nor unhelpful	12	8
Somewhat unhelpful	2	1
Very unhelpful	4	3

18. Overall, how satisfied were you with the counseling you received at the postsecondary school that you attended last year – were you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

	Number	Percent
Very satisfied	101	34%
Somewhat satisfied	94	31
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	78	26
Somewhat dissatisfied	15	5
Very dissatisfied	7	2
Don't know	5	2

19. Overall, how satisfied were you with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program last year – were you generally very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

	Number	Percent
Very satisfied	217	72%
Somewhat satisfied	73	24
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7	2
Somewhat dissatisfied	2	1
Very dissatisfied	1	<1
Don't know	0	0

20. If you had to do make the decision to participate in the program all over again, would you do it?

	Number	Percent
Yes	290	97%
No	7	2
Depends	3	1
Don't know	0	0

21. If you could, would you change any of the following things about the way you participated in the program last year?

		Yes	No	Depends	Don't Know
a.	The postsecondary school that you attended				
	Number	43	245	10	2
	Percent	14%	82%	3%	1%
b.	The type of courses that you took				
	Number	78	217	5	0
	Percent	26%	72%	2%	0%
c.	The number of courses that you took				
	Number	143	153	4	0
	Percent	48%	51%	1%	0%

d. (Probe) Anything else?

	Number	Percent
Yes (specify) See detail pages	38	13%
No	261	87
Don't know	1	<1

22. **Finally, I am going to list some areas where improvements might be needed in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program insofar as it relates to taking courses at postsecondary schools. As I read each one, please tell me whether you think there is no need for improvement, a little need for improvement, some need for improvement, much need for improvement, or a critical need for improvement?**

		No Need	Little Need	Some Need	Much Need	Critical Need	Don't Know
a.	Information about the program provided by your high school						
	Number	33	43	73	80	71	0
	Percent	11%	14%	24%	27%	24%	0%
b.	Information about the program provided by postsecondary schools						
	Number	71	59	93	51	24	2
	Percent	24%	20%	31%	17%	8%	1%
c.	Communication between your high school and postsecondary school						
	Number	87	60	44	61	44	4
	Percent	29%	20%	15%	20%	15%	1%
d.	Counseling by your high school						
	Number	121	57	40	46	34	2
	Percent	40%	19%	13%	16%	11%	1%
e.	Counseling by postsecondary schools						
	Number	127	74	45	33	18	3
	Percent	42%	25%	15%	11%	6%	1%
f.	Rules or procedures for transferring credits back to high school						
	Number	161	54	34	28	20	3
	Percent	54%	18%	11%	9%	7%	1%
g.	Information from postsecondary schools about your performance in courses						
	Number	161	64	47	18	9	1
	Percent	54%	21%	16%	6%	3%	<1%
h.	Transportation						
	Number	196	42	26	18	14	4
	Percent	65%	14%	9%	6%	5%	1%
i.	Warnings about the potential risks in participating in the program						
	Number	132	73	56	20	15	4
	Percent	44%	24%	19%	7%	5%	1%

j. (Probe) Any other area needing improvement?	Number	Percent
Yes (specify) See detail pages	29	10%
No	269	90
Don't know	1	<1
No response	1	<1

k. *(If yes)* Is there a little need, some need, much need, or a critical need for improvement?

	Of those who said yes: Number	Percent
No need	1	3%
Little need	3	10
Some need	7	23
Much need	16	53
Critical need	3	10

23. Because of your participation in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program last year, do you think you've changed in any of the following ways?

		More	Less	About the Same	Don't Know
a. Are you achieving more or less academically or about the same?	Number	175	9	110	6
	Percent	58%	3%	37%	2%
b. Are you more or less interested in your education or about the same?	Number	197	4	99	0
	Percent	66%	1%	33%	0%
c. Are you more or less self-confident or about the same?	Number	186	2	112	0
	Percent	62%	1%	37%	0%
d. Are you more or less eager to challenge yourself or about the same?	Number	183	4	113	0
	Percent	61%	1%	38%	0%

QUESTIONS FOR PREVIOUS SENIORS ONLY (n = 219)

24. Are you currently enrolled in the same postsecondary school that you attended during the 1994-95 school year?

	Number	Percent
Yes	87	40%
No	132	60

25a. Have you transferred all, some, or none of the postsecondary credits that you earned during the 1994-95 school year to your present school? (Circle one)

	Number	Percent
All	148	68%
Some	20	9
None	49	22
No response	2	1

25b. *(If none)* Is it because you haven't tried to transfer credits yet or because your school would not accept them?

	Of those who answered none: Number	Percent
Haven't tried yet	35	70%
School wouldn't accept them	6	12
Other	9	18

Thank you for your participation.

Detail

Question 4o: Categorization of other reasons why student enrolled in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program

	Of those who mentioned other reasons: Number	Percent
Tired of high school/wanted new environment	11	34%
Wanted taste of college life	6	19
Accelerate credits	5	16
More available courses/facilities	4	13
Personal situation	3	9
Better academics	2	6
Exhausted high school course options	1	3

Question 6i: Categorization of other reasons why student attended the postsecondary institution that they did in 1994-95

	Of those who mentioned other reasons: Number	Percent
Lower admissions standards, or later admissions	9	27%
Appropriately sized institution	5	15
Miscellaneous	5	15
School's high reputation	4	12
Appropriate cultural/religious atmosphere	3	9
Credits earned could be transferred later	3	9
Friends/relatives/teachers recommended it	3	9
Specific course or instructor available/wide choice of courses	2	6

Question 7l: Categorization of other problems that the student had with the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program

	Of those who mentioned other problems: Number	Percent
Miscellaneous	4	30%
Not supported by college instructors/staff	3	23
Academic difficulties	2	15
Too much paperwork to handle	2	15
Inadequate instruction	1	8
Too much homework	1	8
Too easy to skip classes	1	8

Question 8h: Other benefits that the student gained from participating in the program

	Of those who mentioned other benefits: Number	Percent
Increased maturity level; added sense of responsibility and independence	10	26%
Helped with career goals, academic advancement	9	24
Better teaching techniques/academics	4	11
Avoid unappealing aspects of high school	4	11
New environment/challenge	3	8
Social opportunities	3	8
Better schedule	3	8
Miscellaneous	2	5

Question 21d: Other things that the student would have changed about participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program in 1994-95

	Of those who mentioned other things: Number	Percent
Would have taken more classes, different types of courses, different instructors	6	25%
Would have started earlier	5	21
Would have studied harder	4	17
Miscellaneous	3	13
Would have taken regular classes, not independent study	2	8
Would have had more contact with high school	2	8
Would have taken classes in day, not evening	1	4
Would have gone to a different school	1	4

Question 22j: Other areas of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program that the student said needed improvement

	Of those who mentioned other areas: Number	Percent
Improve administrative matters such as scheduling, transfer of credits, re-enrolling	12	43%
More support/better information from high school staff/instructors	6	21
More information provided generally	5	18
Expand openings for students, both in terms of admission standards and courses offered	3	11
More support/better information from college staff/instructors	2	7
Miscellaneous	1	4

Minnesota Children
Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning

February 23, 1996

Mr. James R. Nobles, Legislative Auditor
Office of the Legislative Auditor
Centennial Building
659 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Nobles:

This letter is our agency response to your draft study of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program. We congratulate you and your staff for their professional, objective and well balanced report. Our position has been, and continues to be, that PSEO is an excellent program which can be improved. Your report supports that belief. We do support your conclusion that no major changes are warranted.

There are a few areas that we would like to add some clarification or emphasis. First, we recognize the difficulty in projecting potential savings to the state that accrue as a result of dual enrollment in secondary and postsecondary programs. We believe that a longitudinal study would show that ultimately state support for postsecondary education is reduced due to earlier completion of students who begin the postsecondary education in the PSEO program. This contention cannot be stated as fact of course in the absence of such a study.

Second, we agree that the initial motivation for students and parents to enter the program is most often tuition-free postsecondary credit. That motivation is justified in our view by the performance of the PSEO students in the academic programs and by the courses they select. For the most part we believe that they are utilizing this opportunity in a responsible manner. This provides an excellent opportunity for low-income students who otherwise may find postsecondary education to be an inaccessible option.

Third, the lower performance of Technical College PSEO students as compared to those students enrolled in academic programs is of concern to this agency. We agree that Technical Colleges should establish entry standards. Those standards need to include opportunities for probationary entry to assure that students who may be failing due to system problems have an opportunity to perform in a new environment. We also believe we should attempt to answer the following questions:

A.) Does this population represent a higher percentage of at-risk students;

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B.) Is the general population of students in Technical Colleges older and more highly motivated than those found in academic settings; and

C.) Are PSEO Technical College students receiving the same level of counselling that students in other settings receive?

Fourth, we are more than happy to do what we can as an agency to improve communications with postsecondary institutions. We do need some clarification of the areas that need improvement. We have been asked by postsecondary institutions to do some things that are outside of our authority. For example we cannot pre-approve courses for secondary credit because that authority rests with the public schools. Our main communication goal is to attempt to assure that all parents and students are aware of the PSEO program. Coordination and collaboration among this agency, secondary and postsecondary education is essential to assure the program works in a way that benefits the state and its students.

Fifth, although the study did not document any a correlation between the growth of the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, we believe through anecdotal information that PSEO has had a major influence on this growth. Public school administrators have testified that they initiated these programs in order to better compete with the postsecondary institutions. There has been steady and dramatic growth in these programs since the initiation of PSEO. It is also interesting to note that this growth has not diminished participation in PSEO. We would hypothesize that there is more rigor available to students as a result of PSEO, AP and IB.

Finally, it is our observation that potentially some of the most effective PSEO programs are those that result from agreements between postsecondary institutions and secondary schools. These programs were not included in the study due to time constraints. These programs offer convenience to the students because they are often conducted in the secondary school. They also offer an opportunity for improved curriculum articulation because often they are taught by the secondary school staff in collaboration with postsecondary staff. Although there is some concern over the rigor of these programs, at least one postsecondary administrator testified that these programs are more rigorous than on campus programs as a result of the contractual agreements between agencies. We strongly recommend that more of our secondary and postsecondary institutions investigate this option and develop high quality rigorous learning opportunities for the students.

In conclusion I would like to again congratulate you and your auditing staff for your high quality professional report. We take its recommendations seriously and will utilize them in our future planning.

Sincerely,

Bruce H. Johnson

BRUCE H. JOHNSON
Commissioner

Minnesota
State Colleges and Universities
Community Colleges • State Universities • Technical Colleges

February 22, 1996

Mr. Roger Brooks, Deputy Legislative Auditor
Legislative Auditor's Office
Program Evaluation Division
100 Centennial Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Brooks:

Thank you for the thorough study of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program. It reinforces the work our colleges and universities have done with PSEO students and suggests some changes designed to make it an even more effective program.

Increased cooperation and communication between MnSCU colleges and universities and the secondary schools is an important part of the MnSCU agenda. Most development of communication systems, particularly as they apply to the information provided to PSEO students, needs to occur between the campuses and the school districts. Commitment at the local level makes cooperation work and ensures both groups are clear on what constitutes good information and how it differs from program marketing. I will be encouraging colleges and universities to work closely with their local school districts to support the success of programs like PSEO.

In addition, we will work with the technical colleges on their guidelines for admission and support of PSEO students. As they complete the separation from the local school districts, technical college admissions standards similar to those of community colleges and state universities may be desirable.

Finally, the College-in-the-Classroom program appears to provide advanced curricular opportunities for students enrolled in high schools which have limited capacity to offer programs like Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate and are more than forty miles from the nearest postsecondary institution. It would be helpful if you could provide us with a list of those districts so that we might work with their high schools to expand the offerings available to their students as appropriate.

We appreciate the evaulation of PSEO you have undertaken and have found the content and recommendations helpful. We also thank you for the opportunity your staff afforded us to work closely with them as the study proceeded from design to completion.

Sincerely,

Judith S. Eaton

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February 23, 1996

James R. Nobles
Legislative Auditor
Office of the Legislative Auditor
Centennial Building
St. Paul, MN 55155-4708

Dear Mr. Jim Nobles:

Thank you for providing us with the final report on the Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program. We are pleased to have been able to contribute in the design and data collection phases of your study. Your office should be commended for the objectivity and thoroughness with which this study was conducted.

Your primary findings are in agreement with investigations and analyses conducted at the University of Minnesota. Our PSEO students do, in fact, tend to outperform newly-matriculated students as well as add to the overall diversity of our campus. These PSEO students, their parents, our faculty, and administrators tend to be very satisfied with the program's results. We are especially pleased with the fact that approximately 50 percent of these students each year elect to stay here at the University after they graduate from high school. Thus, the PSEO serves as a magnet to keep large numbers of Minnesota's most talented students right here in Minnesota. We realize full well the central role of PSEO in our overall recruitment scheme as well as in our quest to achieve many of our *U2000* goals. This is indeed effective legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. Please let me know if there are any questions or follow up in this matter.

Cordially,

Nils Hasselmo
President

NH:dfg

MINNESOTA PRIVATE COLLEGE COUNCIL

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University of St. Thomas

February 15, 1996

Mr. Roger Brooks
Deputy Legislative Auditor
Office of the Legislative Auditor
Centennial Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Brooks:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Legislative Auditor's draft evaluation of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program (dated February 12, 1996). Though student participation in the program at our colleges represents only a small part of the total, we believe that programs which expand educational options for Minnesotans are an appropriate use of state resources and the most effective way to meet the educational needs and interests of students.

We have little to add to the content of your evaluation. We would, however, like to express our disappointment that postsecondary courses taken at high schools and taught by high school teachers were not included in the evaluation. We are concerned that those courses may lack either the academic rigor or oversight necessary to ensure that they meet college standards. The issue becomes particularly problematic when students seek to transfer those credits to our colleges. We believe that the value of a college education may be compromised when the curriculum is exported to non-college providers. We hope you have an opportunity to review these courses in subsequent evaluations.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review your report.

Sincerely,

David B. Laird, Jr.
President

DBL:llz

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